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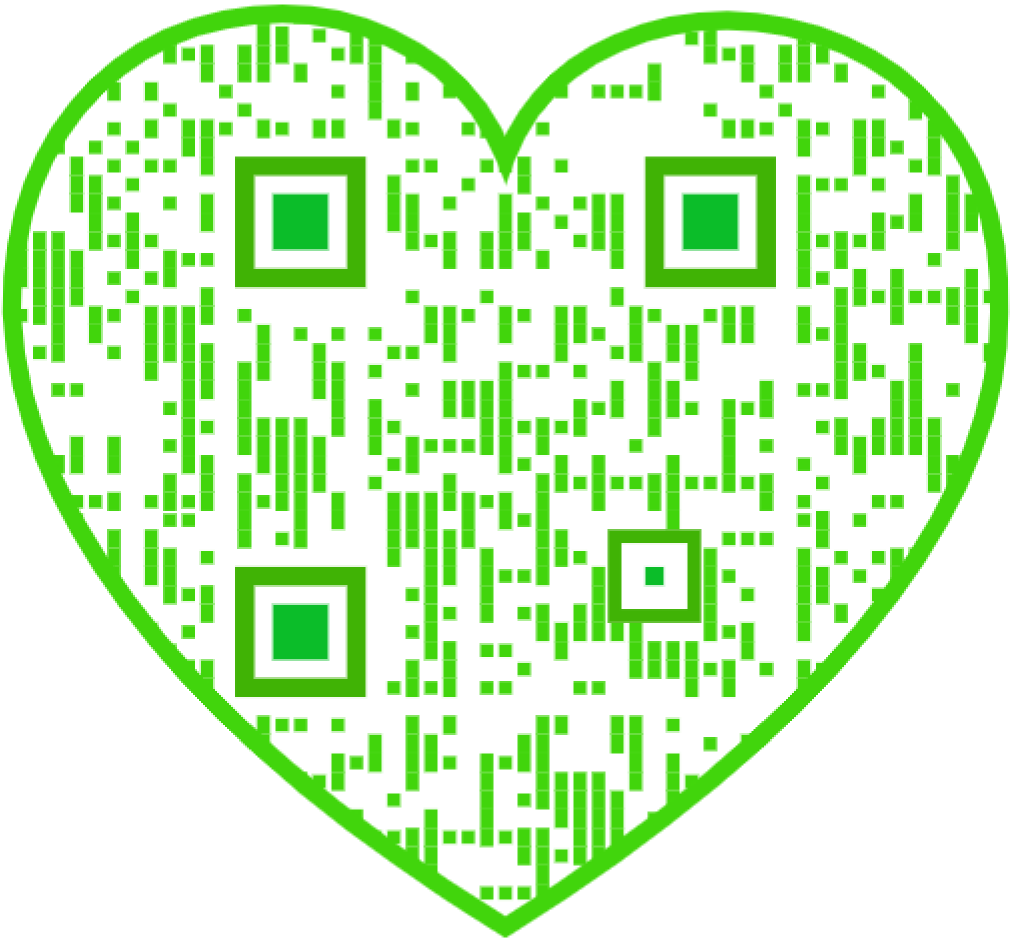

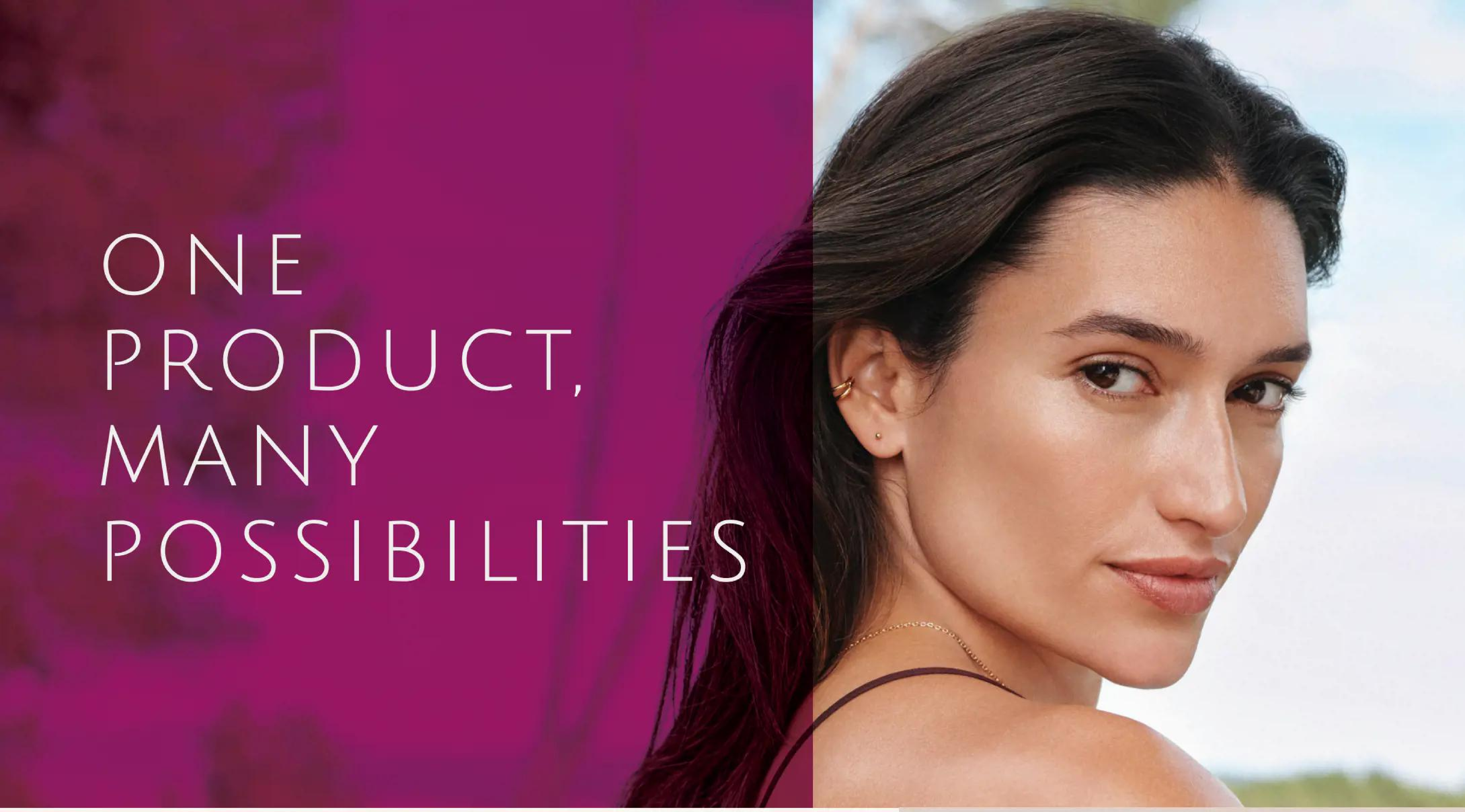

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References 1. Fabi S, et al. Poster presented at the International Master Course on Aging Science (IMCAS) World Congress. 26–28 January 2023. Paris, France; 2. Goldberg D et al. Dermatol Surg. 2013;39(6):915- 922; 3. Galderma. Date on File (MA-60875); 4. Zhang Y, et al. Regen Biomater 2021;8(5):rbab042; 5. Narins RS. et al. J Am Acad Dermatol. 2010;62(3):448–462; 6. Asius J, et al. Inventors. US patent US 7,731,758 B2.2010 7. Hexsel D, et al. Dermatol Surg. 2020;46(8):1122–1124 ; 8. Rittié L, Fisher GJ. Cold Spring Harb Perspect Med. 2015;5:a015370.

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EDITORIAL
Anna Dobbie, editor
Anna.d@thepbgroup.com
+44 (0) 203 728 9064

Vicky Eldridge, consultant editor
Vicky.e@thepbgroup.com
+44 (0) 7931 924 322

Ellen Cummings, Erin Leybourne, Kezia Parkins, contributing reporters

Eve Oxberry, head of editorial

ADVERTISING
Lisa Merrigan
Lisa.M@thepbgroup.com
+ 44 203 728 9065

MARKETING
Meghna Patel
Meghna.p@thepbgroup.com
+44(0)203 841 7364

PUBLISHER
Mark Moloney
Mark.m@thepbgroup.com
+44(0) 207 349 4790

DESIGN
April Harris
April.h@thepbgroup.com

PRODUCTION
CCM
Aestheticmedicine@ccmediagroup.co.uk

PRINTING
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WELCOME TO THE MARCH ISSUE OF AESTHETIC MEDICINE MAGAZINE

Welcome to the March issue of *Aesthetic Medicine*, where we explore two critical pillars shaping the future of our industry: ethics and sustainability.

In this issue, we aim to provide both inspiration and practical guidance on navigating these challenges. From Viviana Botoaca's ambitious vision to create the first fully sustainable clinic (p40) to Dr Sabika Karim's candid reflections on the ethical dilemmas faced by UK practitioners (p36), we explore what it means to practice responsibly in 2025.

Hamilton Fraser's analysis of the top 10 trends for the year (p9) underscores how ethics and sustainability are no longer just aspirational—they're essential for the longevity of our businesses and the trust of our patients. In this vein, we've also included actionable advice on bridging the green skills gap in clinics (p62) and ensuring ethical marketing strategies convert enquiries into bookings (p66).

Our exploration of ethics extends to the broader regulatory landscape, with Tracey Jones shedding light on the latest CQC reforms (p45). Meanwhile, the human stories behind these changes shine through in features like Lorna Bowes' inspiring discussion of leadership and self-care (p64).

On a more technical note, we continue to celebrate innovation, from the latest in high-tech facials (p52) to new clinical trials improving awareness of conditions like Lichen Sclerosus (p32). At the same time, practitioners like Rosanne Joseph-Anthony remind us of the importance of returning to natural aesthetics, with her piece on rejuvenating mature lips (p27).

March is also a significant month for us as we gear up for Aesthetic Medicine London 2025. With a revamped education programme, this year's event promises to be our best yet (p14).

As always, our mission is to champion knowledge, integrity, and progress in aesthetic medicine and we welcome your feedback and suggestions for future topics to cover.

Anna Dobbie
***Aesthetic Medicine* • Editor**

MEET THE *EXPERTS*

The *Aesthetic Medicine* editorial board's clinical expertise and diverse range of specialities help ensure the magazine meets the needs of the readers. In this issue, we have received guidance from the following members:

TRACEY DENNISON

Tracey Dennison is the consultant nurse practitioner at East Riding Aesthetics and Wellness, a multi-award-winning clinic which specialises in restorative and regenerative medical aesthetic treatments to give natural-looking, confidence-boosting enhancements. Dennison has been nursing for over 30 years and was the Aesthetic Medicine Awards' Nurse of the Year 2023.

DR STEVEN LAND

Dr Steven Land MBBS MRCEM is an aesthetic doctor with 10 years of experience in creating award-winning, natural results at his clinic, Novellus Aesthetics. His clinical foci are lip fillers, full face treatments and non-surgical rhinoplasties.

DR MAYONI GOONERATNE

Dr Mayoni Gooneratne is the founder and medical director of Human Health and SkinFit. A former NHS colorectal and pelvic floor surgeon, she realised how little women knew about their health, prompting her to create The Clinic by Dr Mayoni which allows her and her world-class team to deliver an upstream level of care.

DR ANNA HEMMING

Dr Anna Hemming is a fully qualified general practitioner and medical skin doctor with over 22 years of experience. She owns Thames Skin Clinic in Twickenham, which she founded in 2019. Dr Hemming has a background in anaesthetics and emergency medicine, serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps as a captain and spending seven years as a general practitioner at Buckingham Palace.

VANESSA BIRD

Vanessa Bird has worked for many leading distributors in aesthetics. She uses over a decade of industry experience, knowledge, and connections as The Aesthetic Consultant to understand the specific challenges faced by many successful, high-profile individuals and clinics as she helps them to succeed in the elite 'top tier'.

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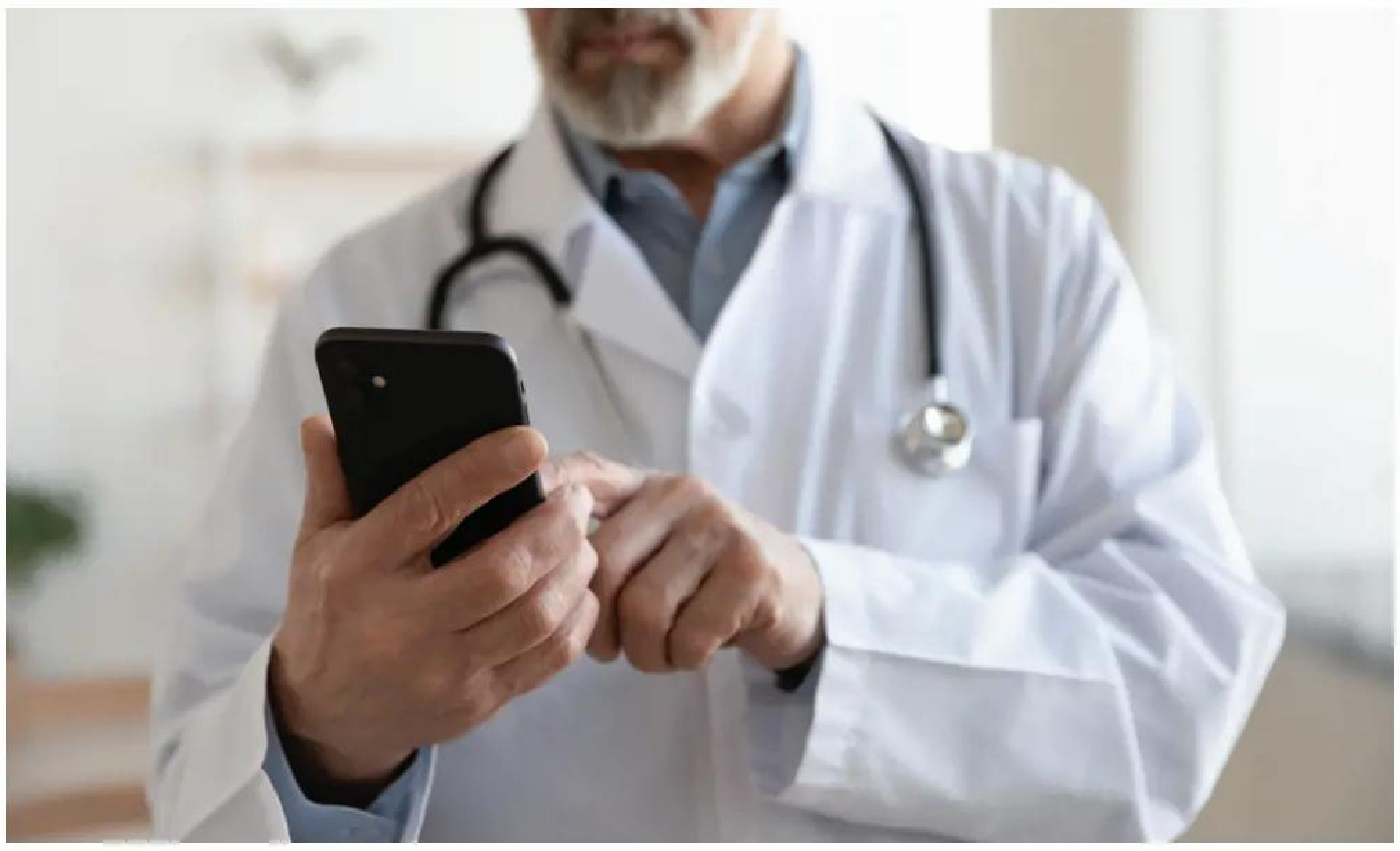


The JCCP declares remote prescribing unacceptable for cosmetic procedures

The Joint Council for Cosmetic Practitioners (JCCP) has shared its support of a recent Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) determination on a fitness to practice case relating to remote prescribing and delegation.

Misconduct allegations against registered nurse Heather Hazzard were addressed and published by the NMC Fitness to Practise Committee, including improper prescribing, failure to verify qualifications, and dishonesty.

The registrant admitted to all charges in a Consensual Panel Determination (CPD) agreement and did not attend the hearing.

A striking-off order, citing the misconduct's severity and its impact on public trust and safety was imposed by the panel, chaired by Lucy Watson.

The JCCP released a statement, formally supporting the NMC's decision and affirming its concern about the standard of prescribing in the aesthetic sector, and the inappropriate supply of POMs.

Internet prescribing platforms that serve to introduce prescribing and non-prescribing practitioners have often been cause for concern in the industry, and the JCCP's statement reminded prescribers that operate through such platforms that their first responsibility remains with their professional regulators, irrespective of the policies and procedures implemented by the platform.

The statement also said that the outcome of the misconduct case should assist in reminding prescribers, practitioners and enforcers for public safety like environmental health officers of their responsibilities.

After engaging with professional regulators including the NMC, and identifying a common ground, the JCCP has formed the basis of a view to restricting remote prescribing for aesthetic procedures.

The council took the opportunity in its statement to highlight several key findings in the case, alongside the JCCP's headline guidance, which you can see on its website.

New online course helps aesthetic clinics boost conversion rates

Vanessa Bird AKA the Aesthetic Consultant, has announced the launch of her new online training course.

Master the Art of Converting Leads with Vanessa Bird is a course that addresses the challenges practitioners and clinics face if they struggle to achieve a return on their lead generation investment. It is designed to help clinics transform enquiries into bookings and boost their revenue.

With over 15 years of experience working with clinics worldwide, Bird teaches practical, ethical communication techniques tailored to the aesthetics industry. The course breaks down important factors such as:

- How to develop the right mindset when moving through lead qualification
- Easy-to-use conversational openers
- Persuasive communication techniques
- Follow-up strategies
- Overcoming objections

Students of the course will also learn about effective ways to tackle price objections and deposit reluctance-key barriers many clinics face today. Suitable for clinics of all sizes, it equips practitioners with the skills to increase conversion rates and turn enquiries into bookings.

For more information, visit The Aesthetic Consultant's course page or contact Vanessa directly at **aestheticconsultant@icloud.com.**

Aesthetic technology brand appoints new president

Aesthetic technology brand Geneo United has announced the appointment of Erin White as president.

White's career spans over 20 years of leadership in med-tech and aesthetics, where she has consistently demonstrated her ability to drive growth and innovation.

Her guiding principle is the 'Quality Hat' philosophy – doing things right the first time. To help bring this to life, White is spearheading a strategy for Geneo United, built around three core pillars:

1. She is focused on innovating to deliver solutions that support the industry and elevate the Geneo United experience for providers and consumers.

2. White's strategy emphasises delivering value to Geneo United's customers through enhanced onsite support and improved digital tools.

3. She is committed to fostering a culture of collaboration, creativity, and empowerment, starting with Geneo United's sales team. White wants to ensure that the company's success is rooted in strong partnerships with its customers and industry stakeholders.

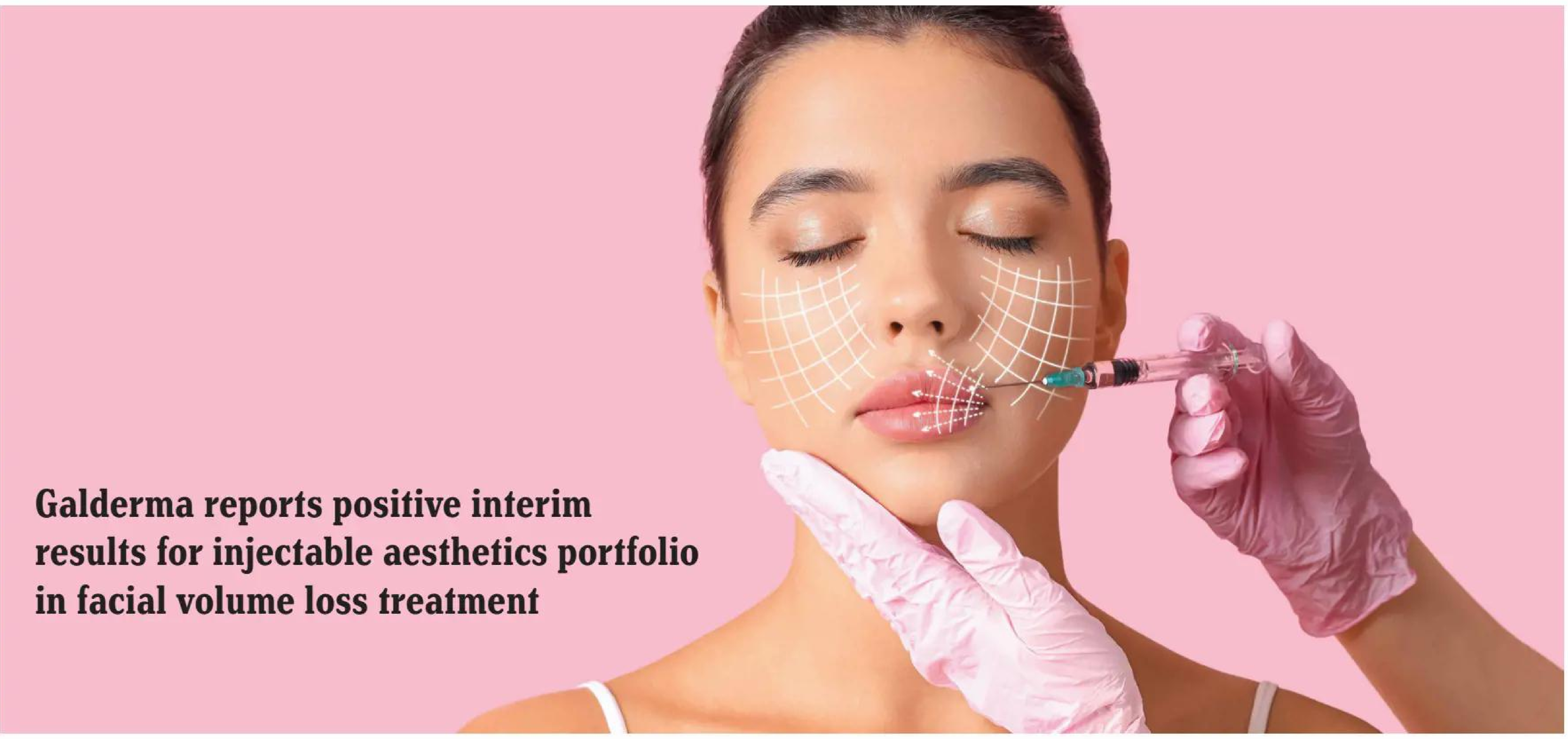
"I am honoured to lead Geneo United into its next chapter," commented White. "With an innovative roadmap, a customer-first mindset, and a commitment to building a high-performance team, we are poised to revolutionise the aesthetics industry together – and have fun doing it.

"I am especially excited to collaborate with the industry veterans across our sales team, including Diane Bottone, Sara Maugh, Christina Quinn, and Stefani Silverman."

Also commenting on the appointment, Tzipi Ozer-Armon, chief executive of Lumenis said: "We are thrilled to welcome Erin White to the Geneo United team."

"White's unparalleled expertise, passion for innovation, and customer-first philosophy align perfectly with Geneo United's mission to revolutionise the industry, while providing a one-of-a-kind experience to our customers.

"With her leadership, I am confident we will propel Geneo United to new heights, delivering exceptional value to our customers and setting new standards in beauty technology."



Galderma reports positive interim results for injectable aesthetics portfolio in facial volume loss treatment

Galderma has announced encouraging interim results from its innovative clinical trial assessing the effectiveness of Restylane Lyft or Contour in combination with Sculptra for patients experiencing facial volume loss due to medication-driven weight loss. The three-month data suggests significant improvements in facial aesthetics, with high levels of patient satisfaction.

The study, conducted across two sites in the US, utilised the SHAPE Up Holistic Individualised Treatment (HIT) approach, and demonstrated enhanced mid-face shape, improved cheek wrinkles, and increased skin hydration and radiance. Notably, 89% of participants reported feeling more attractive and satisfied with their appearance. With a six-month extension study ongoing, the full findings were presented at the JP Morgan Healthcare Conference in San Francisco.

At IMCAS Paris last month, Galderma further educated healthcare professionals by hosting a masterclass with international aesthetics experts to look at managing facial changes in patients experiencing medication-driven weight loss, in clinical practice. Additionally, the first international consensus-based guidelines by global experts for understanding and managing the unique aesthetic needs of this patient population, supported by Galderma, were presented as part of a session dedicated to rapid facial volume loss.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Searches for anti-wrinkle solutions on the rise

Searches for 'non-surgical procedures' have risen by 23% in the last 12 months, and botulinum toxin has proven itself to be the most popular tweakment. Data compiled by the Harley Street Skin Clinic analysed internal records to uncover the top procedures performed most from 2020 to 2024 with PDO thread lifts in second place.

Evolus and BAMAN announce strategic partnership for 2025

Evolus and the British Association of Medical Aesthetic Nurses (BAMAN, was BACN) are partnering in 2025. This 2025 programme is part of the Evolus commitment to education and training within the medical aesthetics healthcare sector.

Agenda confirmed for first Welsh conference

The first-ever Welsh Aesthetics Symposium (WAS) is set to debut on March 29 at the ICC Wales in Newport, bringing together leading voices in the field of aesthetic medicine. The carefully curated, CPD-accredited agenda covers clinical guidance alongside business advice for a comprehensive day of learning.

New initiative to tackle sector waste

In 2025, the British Beauty Council's Sustainable Beauty Coalition is pushing new boundaries to collaboratively tackle beauty industry waste head on. The initiative will focus on increasing industry and consumer awareness and adoption of reuse and refill systems. It is also set to increase recycling rates of empties through spotlighting take-back schemes and household recycling where available.

The Treatment Rooms London welcomes key surgeon to expand holistic hair restoration services

The Treatment Rooms London has expanded its team with the addition of hair transplant surgeon Dr Puroshini Pather, following an increase in demand for the clinic's services.

The Treatment Rooms London, based in Putney, focuses on providing surgeon-led care for patients undergoing hair restoration treatments.

The clinic, co-founded by Dr Roshan Vara and Dr Dilan Fernando in 2016, offers support throughout the entire patient journey – from consultation to post-operative recovery.

The Treatment Rooms London won Hair Restoration Clinic of the Year at the Aesthetic Medicine Awards 2023.

The addition of Dr Puroshini Pather to the team brings further expertise to the clinic. Dr Pather holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of St Andrews and an MBChB from the University of Manchester and gained full GMC registration in 2022.

Her experience in surgical and medical management aligns with the clinic's commitment to patient care.

THE
TREATMENT
ROOMS
LONDON

Dr Mayoni Gooneratne to lead healthgevity and metabolic wellness event

Mentorship and membership programme Human Health Professionals has announced that it will be launching a training event for aesthetic practitioners, all about healthgevity and metabolic wellness.

On Thursday March 6, the gathering will provide aesthetic clinicians with tools, insights, and support to seamlessly integrate human health and wellness into their practices.

Held at Space & Stories, York Road and led by Dr Mayoni Gooneratne, the event will feature workshops, expert-led discussions, and networking opportunities, to equip attendees with practical knowledge to deliver care that goes beyond aesthetics, focusing on human health and wellness.

The event will also offer networking opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals committed to advancing a holistic approach to aesthetics.

"The Human Health Professionals initiative was born from a vision to bridge the gap between aesthetics and wellness," said Dr Gooneratne. "This event will provide clinicians with the expertise and confidence to deliver a truly transformative health care experience for their patients." AM

LONGEVITY TOPS TRENDS LIST FOR 2025

Cosmetic insurance provider **Hamilton Fraser** has unveiled its top 10 aesthetic trends for 2025

The popularity and accessibility of aesthetic treatments have skyrocketed in recent years with 2025 set to be a huge year for the industry, marked by some notable trends.

"The integration of wellness, longevity, and advanced technologies is redefining how we view beauty, moving towards treatments that prioritise health, natural results, and overall wellbeing," says Hamilton Fraser founder and chief executive Eddie Hooker.

"The move towards regenerative aesthetics, personalised care, and the medicalisation of treatments underscores the industry's growing professionalism. With anticipated regulatory advancements and groundbreaking innovations, this is an exciting time for practitioners and patients alike."

THE TOP 10 TRENDS INCLUDE

1. Longevity and biohacking in aesthetics
Biohacking tools like epigenetic testing and hormone profiling are increasingly providing insights into individualised treatments. Meanwhile, the pillars of healthy ageing, such as nutrition, movement, sleep, stress management, cognitive activity and social/spiritual connection, are set to influence treatments, says the report.

2. The rise of regenerative aesthetics
Polynucleotides, bio-stimulating fillers, and exosomes surged in popularity in 2024 and are driving natural, long-term rejuvenation by stimulating the body's natural healing processes and helping bank valuable collagen.

3. 'Less is more' – the end of overfilled faces
The Hollywood Reporter recently described the move away from fillers in the US, along with other trends in cosmetic surgery, as the "de-Kardashian-ification of America".
Patients are increasingly moving away from the overfilled look in favour of subtle, natural "tweakments". The move to regenerative aesthetics and bio-stimulating injectables reflects this shift.

4. Combination treatments and 'treatment stacking'
Combination treatments are nothing new but demand for them is driving market growth with the global combination therapy in the aesthetics market forecasted to reach $8.03bn by the end of 2034. "Treatment stacking", where patient outcomes are refined by integrating multiple modalities for synergistic results, is the latest term de jour, according to Hamilton Fraser.

5. Advancements in personalisation
Patient demand for bespoke treatments will reach new heights in 2025. From diagnostic testing and AI-powered skin analysis to personalised skincare and hormone therapies, customisation is becoming an essential part of patient care.

6. Weight loss medications
With weight-loss injections gaining popularity and being a huge part of the conversation in 2024, clinics are developing complementary treatments to address skin laxity and facial ageing caused by rapid weight loss. The global market for obesity drugs is expected to reach $105bn by 2030, up from $6bn in 2023.

7. A push towards regulation
Increased regulation and the legitimisation of aesthetic procedures as medical treatments are transforming patient safety and industry professionalism. The Royal Society of Medicine's (RSM) new Section of Aesthetic Medicine and Surgery was a significant move to this in 2024.

8. Advances in botulinum toxin
Botulinum toxin is the most performed cosmetic procedure worldwide and has been a staple of aesthetic clinics for almost three decades, but in 2025 it is bound for an upgrade. Innovations in botulinum toxin, including longer-lasting formulations and AI-guided injection techniques, are enhancing precision and results for patients.

9. Hair loss treatments
Hair and scalp health is an emerging focus area in aesthetics, with regenerative treatments like PRP, exosomes, and stem cell therapies gaining traction, particularly for women and patients experiencing weight-loss-related hair thinning.

10. Women's health and menopause
The demand for not only intimate health procedures but also addressing the impact of hormones and menopause on women's overall health (and skin) will continue to rise, according to the report, reflecting the demand for holistic care at every life stage.

To explore the full report, visit **hamiltonfraser.co.uk** AM

OUT & ABOUT

AFTERNOON TEA WITH DR YANNIS ALEXANDRIDES

111 Harley Street, Westminster

Dr Yannis Alexandrides, founder and medical director of 111 Harley St., hosted an exclusive afternoon tea to unveil the top aesthetic treatment trends for 2025, attended by contributing reporter Ellen Cummings. Key trend innovations mentioned by Dr Alexandrides included micrografting as a long-lasting alternative to dermal fillers, the expanding role of bio-collagen stimulation with polynucleotides, and the increasing integration of exosomes for enhanced skin regeneration. Dr Alexandrides also highlighted jaw and chin sculpting innovations, from submental liposuction to Thermage JawSculpt, emphasising 111 Harley St.'s 360° approach to aesthetics with a combination of surgical and non-surgical expertise to achieve optimal, natural results.

LUNA MICROCARE BRAND REFRESH

The Franklin, Knightsbridge

Luna Microcare held an exclusive evening at The Franklin hotel to celebrate its brand transformation under new management. Beauty therapists, press and influencers gathered to learn about the brand's skincare products, with keynote speaker Smita Ahluwalia – skin specialist, home salon owner, and PB Awards judge – sharing her experience using Luna Microcare's face masks and microneedle patches. The event, which had a silver-themed dress code, helped the brand to reintroduce its high-performance products designed to elevate professional and at-home skincare routines.

CLOUD TWELVE
Notting Hill

HEALING WITH INTENTIONS

Cloud Twelve, Notting Hill

On January 22, wellness and lifestyle club Cloud Twelve hosted an exclusive event designed to align the body, mind, and spirit for the year ahead.

For two hours, press including editor Anna Dobbie were welcomed into a serene and luxurious setting for a morning of learning about intentional living practices. Herbalist, homeopath, and Cloud Twelve founder Jenya Di Pierro led an insightful Q&A session, sharing her expertise on medicinal plants, intelligent nutrition, and manifestation. Following this, attendees participated in a guided meditation and intention-setting session, equipping them with practical tools to release stagnant energy, cultivate inner balance, and step into 2025 with renewed clarity and purpose.

AestETHICS

ETHICS IN AESTHETIC MEDICINE CAN BECOME A COMMITMENT FOR ALL.

In recent years, aesthetic medicine has undergone an important evolution that has led to the reconsideration of its ethical aspects and a clearer definition of the opportunities and limitations of intervention, in order to promote an increasingly authentic beauty. IBSA Derma, a long-time promoter of the cultural dimension of aesthetic medicine, has intercepted and amplified the voices of a group of physicians, fostering an ethical reflection on clinical practice with a project of communication and in-depth analysis that aims to initiate a broader conversation at an international level for the benefit of patients.

Thus was born **AestETHICS: the global conversation on ethics in aesthetic medicine**, a program that also boasts the support of the italian scientific societies of aesthetic medicine SIME and AGORÀ, and the support of the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS), creating a system of education and information that can have a positive impact on the entire field while enhancing the uniqueness and authentic beauty of each individual.

Learn more at ibsaderma.com/aestethics

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W-WELLNESS ACADEMY LAUNCH

Claridge's, London

Contributing reporter Kezia Parkins attended a beautiful breakfast on February 6 with supplement distributor W-Wellness to announce the launch of its new academy to educate, empower and support practitioners. She had a lovely time with Dr Pam Benito, Dr Nicola Coughlan, Vicky Eldridge and Dr Ahmed El Muntasar.

Kezia Parkins
two
ILLUMINATE

MEDIK8 LIQUID PEPTIDES ADVANCES MP LAUNCH

Searcys at the Gherkin, London

On February 6, Medik8 launched a new product containing a super exciting new ingredient, miniproteins. Contributing reporter Kezia Parkins enjoyed an incredible panel discussion between broadcaster Ateh Jewel, Tweakments Guide editor Alice Hart-Davis and cosmetic physician Dr Bibi Ghalaie.

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IMCAS WORLD CONGRES 2025

Palais des Congrès, Paris

This year's annual congress, which took place from January 30 to February 1, featured cutting-edge symposia, networking opportunities, and groundbreaking product launches.

One of the major highlights of the event was the reveal of Relfydess, the first and only ready-to-use liquid neuromodulator developed using its innovative Pearl Technology. Designed to optimise activity and purity, the formulation ensures a highly active product containing only the essentials. In addition, Galderma demonstrated its leadership in injectable aesthetics within the realm of medication-driven weight loss with new research and the introduction of the first international consensus-based guidelines. The research confirmed that loose or sagging skin on the face and neck is commonly observed after medication-driven weight loss, with facial changes typically noted three to six months following treatment in 45% of respondents and as early as one to two months in 28% of cases. More than 60% of these patients expressed strong interest in a dual-expertise service that integrates both medical and aesthetic professionals to support them during their weight loss journey.

IBSA's symposium on Profhilo Structura showcased advancements in adipose tissue restoration, while a second highlighting the transformative potential of Nahyco technology. Experts from around the world presented the latest clinical insights, demonstrating how Profhilo Structura is enhancing tissue quality and restoring volume with remarkable precision. A key highlight was the live injection session, allowing attendees to witness first-hand the product's immediate and natural-looking effects. Delegates left not only understanding but also feeling and seeing the tangible results.

Among the other highly anticipated sessions was Sunekos' symposium on January 31, where Dr Gloria Trocchi and Dr Marko Mance introduced an enhanced formula for skin renovation. This insightful discussion explored the latest advancements in skin revitalisation, equipping attendees with invaluable expertise on regenerative aesthetic solutions.

The congress also hosted the official launch of Harley Academy's Global Evidence Matrix (GEM), the first standardised, evidence-based guide to injectable treatments for aesthetic medicine professionals. Speaking at the Prollenium Medical Technologies symposium, Harley Academy founder Dr Tristan Mehta outlined GEM's transformative role in driving product innovation, enhancing safety protocols, and reshaping training standards for the future of aesthetic medicine. From February 2025, Harley Academy will oversee the full rollout of GEM, empowering practitioners with this pioneering tool to elevate their practice, enhance learning, and reinforce patient safety.

The scientific and business programme was packed with sessions showcasing the latest advancements in aesthetic medicine. Highlight sessions focused on branding and success in the digital age, breast-plasty, new trends in hair restoration, photoprotection and damaged skin, controversies in cosmetic dermatology and ultrasonography safety. As always, attendees worked hard and partied harder. Harpar Grace International hosted an exclusive dinner at Pink Mamma on January 30, providing an intimate setting to connect with industry friends. On January 31, the AM team attended IBSA Derma's networking aperitif at Hyatt Regency Paris Etoile Hotel before heading to The Bridge for the Skinceuticals Party, an elegant evening of celebration.

With a dynamic agenda filled with innovation, education, and some amazing networking opportunities, IMCAS Paris 2025 was an unmissable event for medical aesthetics professionals worldwide.

Gathering the World
of Dermatology, Plastic Surgery & Aging Science
PARIS
PALAIS DES CONGRÈS
JAN 30 TO FEB 1
2025

Levelling up

Aesthetic Medicine London's education programme is levelling up for 2025 with some new twists on its existing format

IN-CLINIC WITH
MISS NATASHA BERRIDGE
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Aesthetic Medicine London is back at Olympia for 2025, and with education always at its heart, we can't wait to unveil what we have in store for our 11th event.

Taking place on Friday, May 9 and Saturday, May 10, 2025, AM London's education caters for the whole team with plenty of opportunities to earn valuable CPD hours.

Whether you are a plastic surgeon, aesthetic doctor, dermatologist, dentist, nurse, hair restoration surgeon, trichologist, skin therapist or clinic owner, we've got you covered.

And what's more, for 2025, we are turning the tables on our existing format and shaking things up to bring you an exciting new lineup featuring fresh speakers and formats.

NEW FOR 2025: THE TAKE-OVER STAGES

Our take-over stages will see the British College of Aesthetic Medicine (BCAM) and the Complications in Medical Aesthetics Collaborative (CMAC) take over the agendas on Friday, May 9, to bring you their expert-led clinical content. Saturday, May 10, will see the British Association of Medical Aesthetics Nurses (BAMAN) nurses shining a light on the highest standards of nursing practice and the Women in Aesthetic Medicine (WIAM) championing women in the sector.

This stage will also host Dr Steven Land's Emerging Experts (formerly New Blood) agenda after a successful first year in 2024. This programme brings new faces to the stage to give those who have never spoken at conferences before a chance to share their insights and celebrate the up-and-coming stars of the field.

NEW FOR 2025: THE DENTAL AGENDA

Dentists are an integral profession within the aesthetics speciality, bringing unique skills to the table, so this agenda celebrates those whose background training is in dentistry.

SKIN & BODY
DA

Hear from leading dentists who have created thriving aesthetic practices. Look at aesthetics from the perspective of a dental professional and share with colleagues about how you incorporate your dental skills into your aesthetic treatment outcomes.

BACK FOR 2025: THE REGENERATIVE MEDICINE CONFERENCE

Prof Ali Ghanem will be once again curating a day of science-led education focused on regenerative medicine on Friday, May 10. Featuring researchers and practitioners who are leading the way in cutting-edge regenerative medicine, this is one conference stream not to be missed for those looking to move into one of the most exciting and evolving areas of aesthetics. This is the seventh year AM London will have hosted the Regenerative Medicine conference, which has gone from strength to strength.

BACK FOR 2025: THE BUSINESS AGENDA

The business agenda has always been a crucial part of the AM London education lineup, and with Danny Large and Success in Aesthetic Business (SIAB) once again running the stage, you can look forward to workshops on topics ranging from social media, marketing, and video content, to regulation, CQC registration and tax. With panel discussions and deep-dive talks from both clinic owners/practitioners and business coaches, our business workshops arm you with actionable takeaway tips.

NEW FOR 2025: FOCUSED WORKSHOPS

Rather than running multiple competing streams for 2025, we are combining our clinical and skin and body agendas to bring you separate focused workshops across the event.

On Friday's agenda (May 9), we will see two-hour workshops on dermatology, weight loss, longevity and biohacking, as well as a masterclass in combination treatments, while Saturday, May 10, will bring you a menopause masterclass, an evolution of injectables session and a workshop on equipment.

Some sections will be open to HCPs only, while others will be open to all visitors.

BACK FOR 2025: THE LIVE STAGE

AM London's Live Stage is where you get a chance to see the latest treatment innovations from our exhibitors, including headline sponsor Cutera. This free open-to-all stage is all about showcasing the tech, products and techniques leading the market.

BACK FOR 2025: BAHRS

Aesthetic Medicine is delighted to partner with the British Association of Hair Restoration Surgery (BAHRS) for their annual conference. The one-day meeting will provide a fantastic educational opportunity by bringing together some of the UK's best practitioners to discuss treatments, techniques and new products. While this event is a fantastic opportunity for professionals already practising to augment their knowledge, the conference will also offer insight for delegates new to the hair loss and restoration field into what the best treatment options would be to get started with.

PUT YOURSELF FORWARD AS A SPEAKER FOR AM LONDON 2025

We have always been proud of our diverse multi-speciality speaker faculty, but this year, we are shaking things up and inviting some new faces to the table, too. By opening up a call for abstracts, we want to diversify our speaker lineup and add fresh takes and ideas to the topics we are covering. If you have ever fancied taking to the stage to share your knowledge and expertise, then we want to hear from you. You can submit your abstracts by filling out this form **aestheticmed.co.uk/submitabstract**

To book your tickets, visit:
www.aestheticmed.co.uk/book

Regenerating THE SECTOR

Editor **Anna Dobbie** visits **Dr Sabika Karim** in Northwood to find out about her clinic's surgical expansion and why regenerative medicine is the future

Dr Sabika Karim's journey in the field of aesthetic medicine started with a childhood fascination with the medical profession, sparked by a life-changing family experience. As a respected figure in the aesthetics sector and the founder of Skin Medical, Dr Karim's clinic reflects her deep commitment to patient care, natural results, and continuous education in an ever-evolving field.

THE BEGINNING OF A LIFELONG PASSION

Dr Karim's interest in medicine began at a young age, when her father suffered a heart attack and was saved by an exceptional medical team. This experience, paired with her innate curiosity, led her to pursue a career in medicine. "I knew from the age of 10 that I wanted to be a doctor," she shares, "but what really drew me to aesthetics was the ability to improve the 'quality' of people's lives, rather than just focusing on the quantity of life."

After completing her medical training at King's College London and further specialising in general practice, Dr Karim expanded her skillset by undertaking a fellowship in minimally invasive aesthetics in New York. She was one of the early pioneers in the UK to offer treatments like non-surgical rhinoplasties and temple fillers, long before they became mainstream in the aesthetics world. "Back then, there were only a handful of fillers, and no real training available in the UK," she explains. "That's why I went to New York."

PIONEERING AESTHETIC PRACTICES

The aesthetics field has undergone significant evolution since Dr Karim's early days in the sector. What began as a simple approach of "chasing the line" by targeting visible wrinkles or folds has evolved into a more holistic view of facial aesthetics. Today, Dr Karim is focused on "restructuring the face" by replacing lost volume, repositioning tissues, and enhancing skin texture. This approach, combined with her nearly two decades of experience, allows Dr Karim to offer treatments that create natural-looking, rejuvenated results.

"It's been amazing to watch the industry grow. We no longer just fill lines; we're now thinking about how to restore the face to its original harmony," Dr Karim says, with regards to her focus on regenerative aesthetics, including collagen-stimulating injectables.

CREATING SKIN MEDICAL

In 2013, Dr Karim took the bold step of opening her first clinic. Since then, she's opened and rebranded her current clinic, Skin Medical, which is set to celebrate its fifth anniversary in June 2025. Skin Medical was born from the lessons Dr Karim learned through years of experience, both in practice and in business.

"At Skin Medical, it's all about delivering five-star service alongside five-star results," Dr Karim explains. The clinic is purpose-built, with a design that creates a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for patients. Unlike many aesthetic clinics, where the focus is often solely on results, Skin Medical places equal emphasis on patient education and comfort. "We spend more time with patients during consultations than we do on treatments. It's about building a relationship and helping them make informed decisions."

Dr Karim is adamant that no patient leaves the clinic feeling rushed or unsure. "I spend time with my patients and ask them to bring in photos from years ago, so we can talk about where they want to be in the future," she explains. "We don't just focus on the 'problem areas'; we work on the overall balance and health of their skin." If a treatment isn't right for a patient, she won't hesitate to say no: "I'm the queen of saying 'no'! It's about doing what's right for the patient."

CHAMPIONING WOMEN IN AESTHETICS

Dr Karim is also passionate about supporting other women in aesthetic medicine. The idea for *Aesthetic Medicine*'s Women in Aesthetic Medicine group came partially from her experiences of navigating a male-dominated industry, being introduced on stage with a nod to her physical attributes as opposed to her extensive education and technical abilities. While many of the clinic owners and key opinion leaders (KOLs) in the aesthetics space are male, Dr Karim believes that women have unique perspectives and insights to offer. "We need to support each other," she says. "I've made it a point to mentor other women in the industry and help propel them forward."

Her commitment to championing women's voices is also reflected in her speaking engagements, where she has shared her knowledge with peers and colleagues. "I've always loved teaching, whether it's mentoring trainees or speaking at conferences," she explains. "It's about sharing knowledge and elevating the whole industry."

BRINGING CENTRAL LONDON EXCELLENCE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Dr Karim's vision for her clinic goes beyond providing exceptional treatments – she's on a mission to bring the finest aesthetic services to her local community, offering patients access to the kind of quality they would expect in central London, without the need to make the journey.

Having grown up in the Northwood area and with her family still living nearby, Dr Karim wanted to create a clinic that reflected her personal connection to the community. "I wanted something quite local for my family and for myself. It was important to me to offer a specialist clinic where people don't have to travel to London for high-end treatments," she shares. The clinic not only provides top-notch care but also offers a sense of privacy and exclusivity, crucial for both local patients and high-profile patients who prefer discretion.

Strategically located near key transport links like Heathrow Airport and major film studios in Watford makes Skin Medical a convenient destination for patients flying in from around the world. "We have people coming from as far as Edinburgh and New Zealand," Dr Karim mentions. "It's amazing to have a wide range of patients who trust us with their care."

THE POWER OF A PERSONAL TOUCH

While Dr Karim serves patients globally, she remains deeply rooted in her local community. "I see my patients in Waitrose or when I'm out shopping; they're my neighbours," she laughs. "It's nice to offer a service where people know they can get top-tier care, right on their doorstep."

Although the area has seen an increase

in aesthetic offerings from salons to dental practices, Dr Karim's clinic stands out for its focus on safety, professionalism, and a bespoke approach to beauty. "There's a big difference between going to a hairdresser and a specialist clinic," Dr Karim emphasises. "Here, every treatment is precise, logged, and tracked. Our equipment is regularly serviced, and we make sure everything we use is gold standard."

She acknowledges the importance of transparency and quality, especially as the industry has grown, and aims to educate her patients about the benefits of choosing high-quality treatments over lower-cost alternatives. "I see patients who initially went for cheaper options and ended up having to redo their procedures within months. When they come to us, they realise the value in investing in longer-lasting results," Dr Karim explains, giving the example of longer lasting lip filler treatments when higher-quality products are used.

OFFERING A FULL SPECTRUM

The clinic's environment is designed with comfort and luxury in mind. With multiple treatment rooms catering to various aesthetic needs, patients can enjoy a tailored experience, whether they're seeking facial aesthetics, body sculpting, or surgical procedures. Dr Karim highlights some of the clinic's standout features, like the body sculpting suite equipped with CoolSculpting Elite, Emsculpt Neo, and Emerald Laser for the ultimate in non-surgical body contouring. For those interested in more advanced treatments, there's an operating theatre for procedures like fat transfer and small liposuction, a major step in expanding the clinic's capabilities.

"We have a wide range of injectables, collagen stimulators, and body treatments," shares Dr Karim. "Having a range of tools means we can offer personalised, bespoke results." This flexibility is key in meeting each patient's unique needs, whether they're looking for a subtle enhancement or a more transformative procedure.

FUTURE GROWTH

As the clinic continues to grow, Dr Karim has big plans for the next phase of its evolution. Skin Medical is preparing to officially launch its surgical suite, complete with an open day to educate patients and introduce new surgical offerings. Additionally, Dr Karim is set to bring new, cutting-edge products into the clinic, such as Julaine's PLLA collagen-stimulating injections, which she's one of the few doctors in the UK to offer.

"We're focused on regenerative aesthetics, with an emphasis on creating natural, lasting results," Dr Karim explains. "There's a real shift toward collagen-stimulating treatments like Lanluma, Ellanse and Harmonyca, which offer long-term results and a more natural, gradual enhancement."

The clinic's focus is on education and patient empowerment, with plans to host monthly educational forums where patients can learn more about aesthetic treatments and the science behind them. "I want patients to understand what they're getting and why it's the right treatment for them. It's not about trends or following fads on Instagram—it's about being the best version of yourself."

REGULATION AND COLLABORATION

Looking to the future, Dr Karim also hopes to see greater regulation in the industry, something she believes is essential for patient safety. "The industry needs standards that everyone can follow," she says, advocating for stricter control over clinical waste disposal, sanitation, and the sourcing of medical products.

In addition to regulation, Dr Karim is passionate about collaboration within the industry. "I'd love to see more open exchange of ideas among practitioners. By working together, we can raise the bar and keep pushing the industry forward."

Her goal is to offer a space where patients can experience the best of both worlds: high-end, specialised care, while also feeling supported and educated throughout their aesthetic journey. "If we educate our patients and work with them to achieve natural, healthy results, I think we can make a real difference in the industry."

THE FUTURE OF AESTHETIC MEDICINE

As we look towards 2025, Dr Karim's forward-thinking approach to aesthetic treatments remains as relevant as ever. With a focus on regenerative aesthetics and collagen-stimulating treatments, she's excited to see the industry continue to evolve. "It's not just about looking good; it's about feeling good in your own skin. And that's what I strive to help my patients achieve," she says.

Whether it's providing natural, understated treatments or mentoring the next generation of aesthetic professionals, Dr Karim's work continues to shape the future of aesthetic medicine, one patient at a time.

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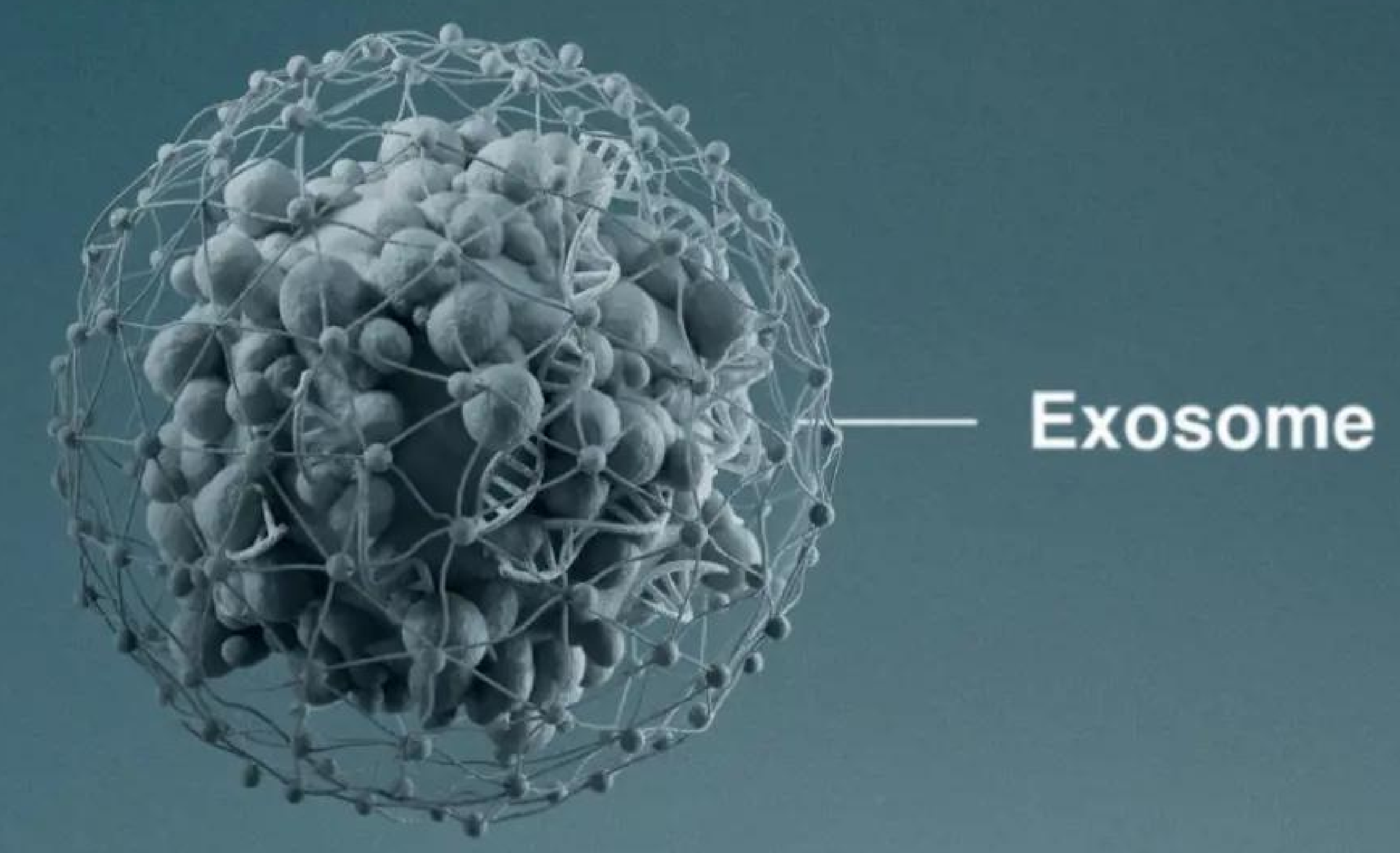

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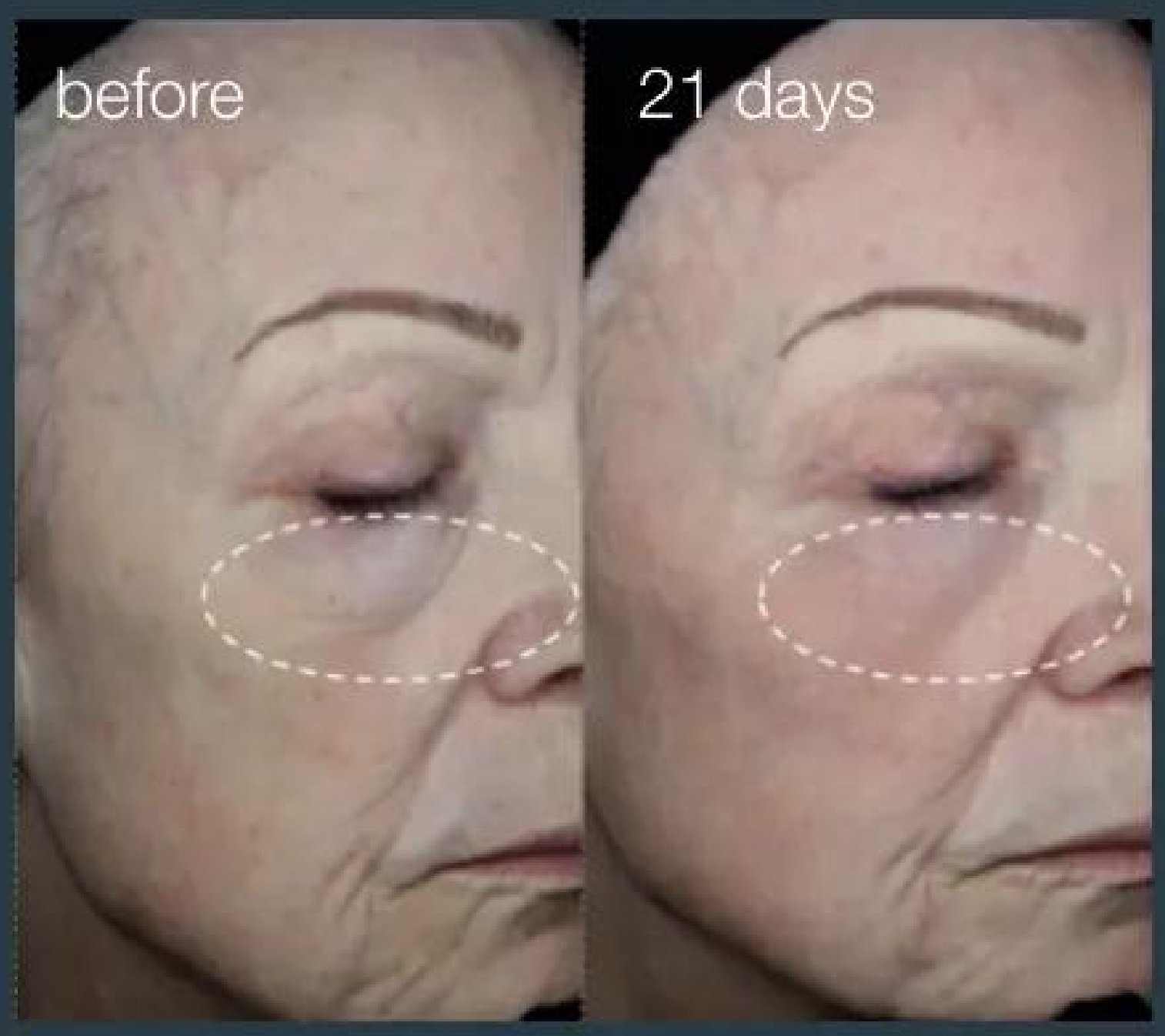
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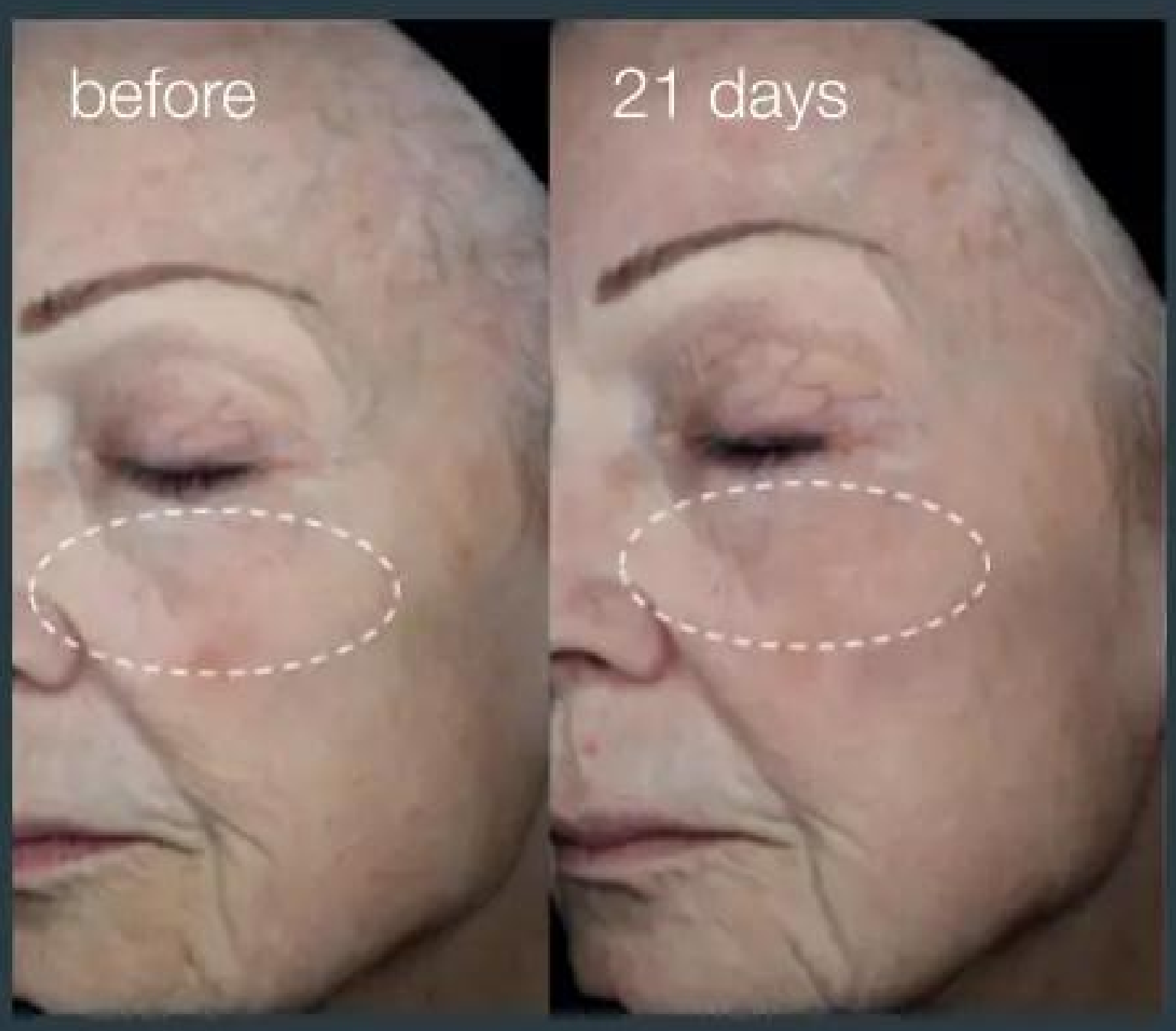
21 days

Tixel laser with exo booster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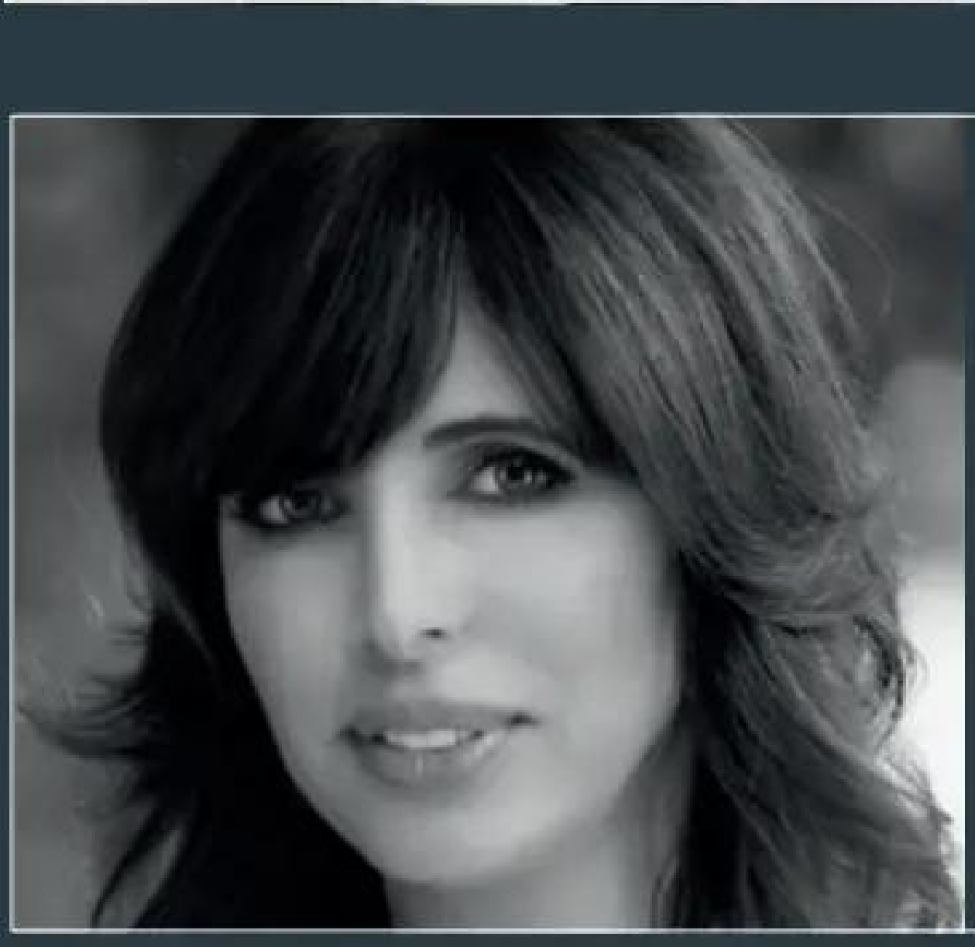

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UNVEILING THE POWER OF *topical growth factors*

Dr Dev Patel considers revolutionising skin health and aesthetic practices

DR DEV PATEL

Dr Dev Patel is a globally reputed aesthetic physician, speaker and trainer and winner of multiple industry awards. His skin clinic Perfect Skin Solutions has also won over 10 awards including Best Clinic Southeast England 2024 (Aesthetic Medicine Awards). He is also founder of skincare brand, CellDerma which focuses on growth factor technology. CellDerma has already won several awards including 'Most Sustainable Company' (CCR 2023), 'Best Multi-tasking Serum' (Marie Claire Skincare Awards 2024 - Youth Restore), 'Most Innovative Green Ingredient' (the Global Green Beauty Awards 2024 - GF5 Next Generation) and 'Best New Dermatological Treatment/Product 2024' (Pure Beauty Awards – GF5 Next Generation).

Dr Dev Patel

Topical growth factors have emerged as transformative tools in dermatology, offering unparalleled potential for skin health and rejuvenation. Their role spans wound healing, regenerative skincare, and integration into pre- and post-procedural protocols, making them a cornerstone of modern aesthetic practices. This article explores their mechanisms of action, benefits, and applications, while also addressing how these growth factors are manufactured for cosmetic use and the legal frameworks governing their use.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCIENCE: KEY ROLE IN WOUND HEALING

Wound healing is a dynamic process driven by a complex interplay of cellular and molecular events. At the core of this process are growth factors—bioactive molecules that regulate essential aspects of tissue repair.[1] Epidermal growth factor (EGF), insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), and fibroblast growth factors (bFGF and aFGF) play critical roles in orchestrating wound healing, while vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) supports angiogenesis.[2] These are just a select few of many different growth factors that play a role in maintaining skin health.

EGF stimulates keratinocyte and fibroblast proliferation, promoting epidermal renewal and dermal regeneration.[3] IGF-1 enhances cellular growth and survival, supporting collagen synthesis and tissue strength.[4] bFGF and aFGF accelerate fibroblast proliferation and extracellular matrix production, contributing to faster wound closure.[5] VEGF stimulates the formation of new blood vessels, ensuring efficient delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the regenerating skin.[6] Together, these growth factors coordinate the sequential phases of wound healing, ensuring efficient tissue repair and restoration of skin integrity.[7]

REGENERATIVE BENEFITS: FROM WOUND HEALING TO ANTI-AGEING STRATEGIES

Beyond wound healing, topical growth factors have profound applications in anti-ageing skincare. By stimulating collagen synthesis, elastin production, and epidermal turnover, they improve skin texture, firmness, and radiance i.e., all key parameters of skin health.[8] Their antioxidant properties neutralise free radicals and mitigate oxidative stress, counteracting photoageing and enhancing skin resilience.[9,10]

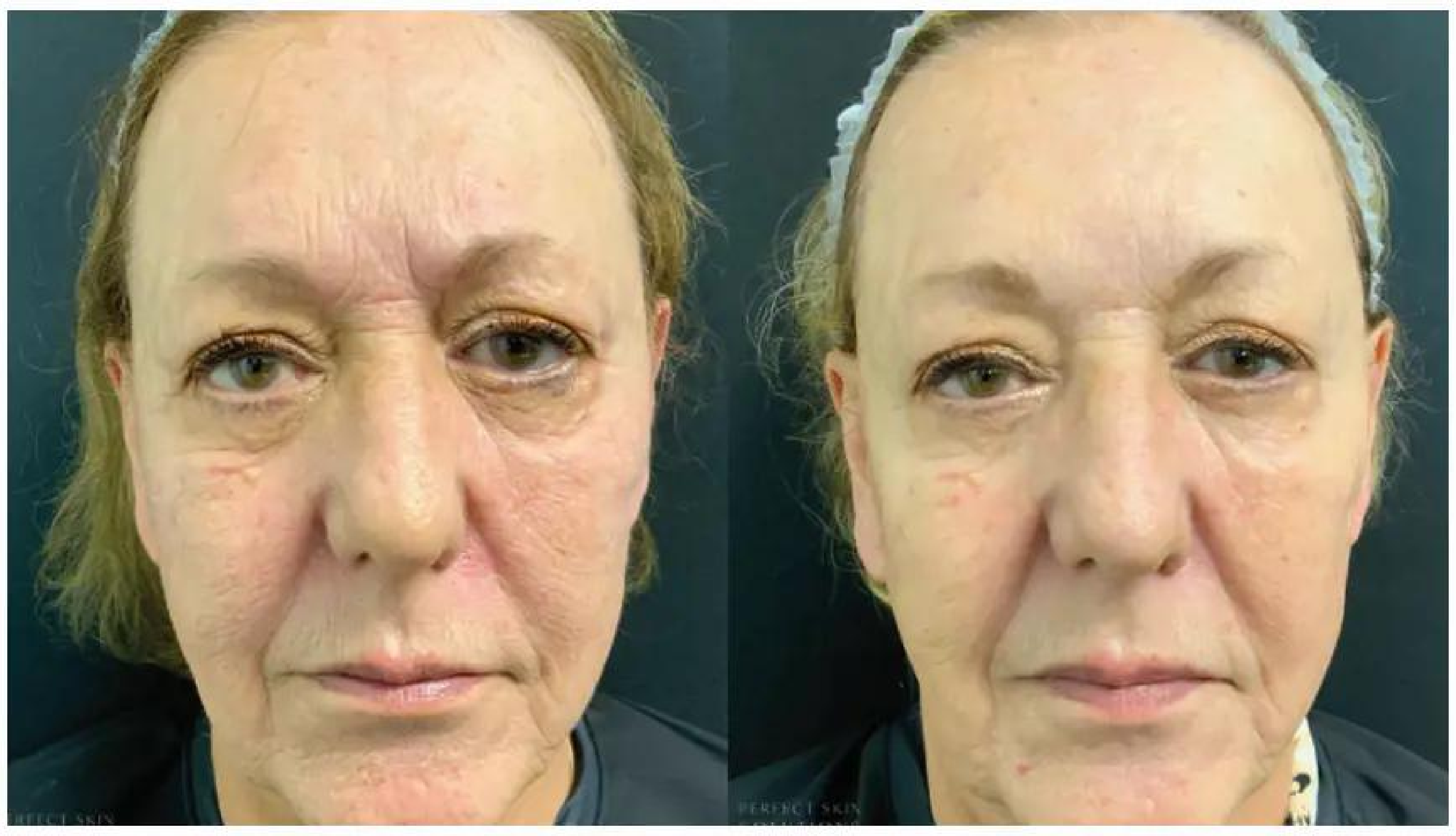
Topical growth factors serve as powerful tools for preventing premature ageing and preserving youthful skin by addressing cellular repair mechanisms and environmental damage.[11]

MECHANISMS OF ACTION

Growth factors, being polypeptides, are relatively large molecules with molecular weights typically ranging between 5,000 and 50,000 daltons.[12] For topical applications, the general rule is that molecules must be less than 500 daltons to penetrate the skin barrier effectively.[13] There are numerous published studies demonstrating the effects of topical growth factors. So, how do they exert their effects when applied topically?

OVERCOMING THE SIZE BARRIER

Although growth factors are too large to penetrate the skin's intact stratum corneum directly, they act via indirect mechanisms. When applied topically, they interact with receptors on epidermal cells or within micro-abrasions caused by treatments such as micro-needling, laser resurfacing, or chemical peels, which temporarily compromise the skin barrier.[14] This enhanced permeability allows growth factors to reach deeper layers, where they stimulate enhanced repair and regeneration.[15] In fact, most patients seen in clinic will have a degree of compromise to their skin barrier which aids penetration of the growth factors.



▲ Fig 1: 24-day result using only a home topical growth factor serum, twice daily.

THE DOUBLE PARACRINE EFFECT

A particularly important mechanism is the **double paracrine effect** (especially when considering use in healthy intact skin), where topically applied growth factors stimulate epidermal keratinocytes to secrete secondary growth factors, such as VEGF, IGF-1, and EGF.[16] These secondary growth factors act in a paracrine manner, signalling nearby fibroblasts in the dermis to initiate collagen production, angiogenesis, and extracellular matrix remodelling.[17] This cascade amplifies the effect of the initial growth factor application, ensuring that even limited penetration can result in substantial biological activity.[18]

KEY INTRACELLULAR PATHWAYS

1. **Ras/MAPK pathway:** Growth factor receptors recruit adaptor proteins like Grb2, leading to activation of the Ras/MAPK cascade. This pathway promotes cellular proliferation and differentiation, critical for skin rejuvenation.[19]

2. **PI3K/Akt pathway:** Activation of PI3K generates PIP3, which activates Akt, enhancing cell survival and protein synthesis. This pathway is integral to skin barrier repair (20).

3. **JAK/STAT pathway:** Ligand binding activates STAT proteins, which translocate to the nucleus to regulate genes involved in proliferation and immune responses.[21]

HOW GROWTH FACTORS ARE MADE FOR THE COSMETIC INDUSTRY

The growth factors used in cosmetic products are manufactured through three primary methods:

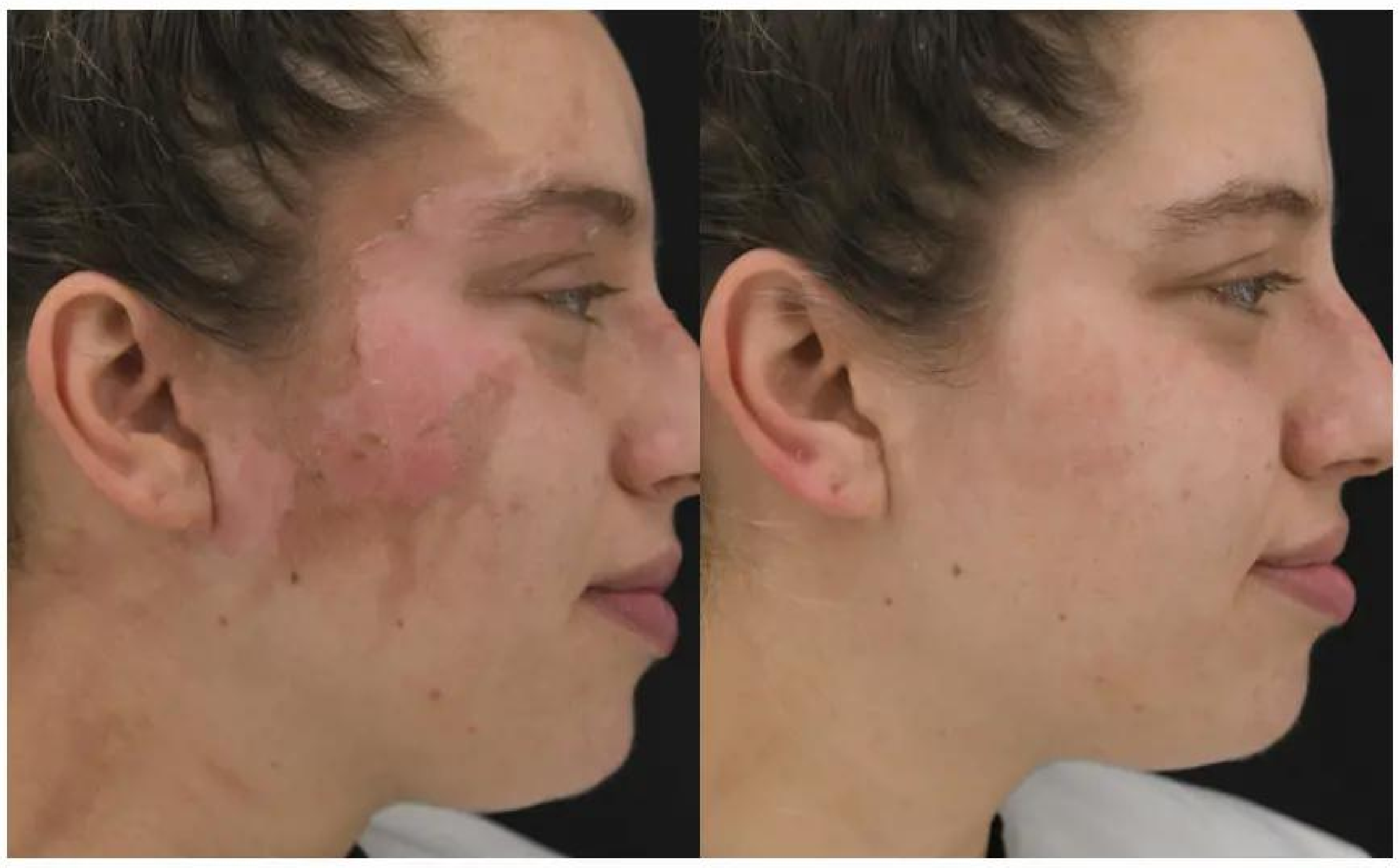
1. **Human-derived growth factors:** Historically, some growth factors were derived from human cells or tissues. This process involves culturing fibroblasts or keratinocytes and harvesting the secreted growth factors. However, **current EU and UK cosmetic regulations prohibit the use of human-derived cells or tissues in cosmetic products,** as outlined in Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009, Annex II.[22] Despite this, some companies illegally market products containing human-derived growth factors, breaking these laws.

2. **Animal-derived growth factors:** Some growth factors are extracted from animal tissues, such as bovine or porcine sources. While still used in some regions, these sources raise ethical concerns and carry risks of contamination, leading to a decline in their use in favour of synthetic alternatives.[23]

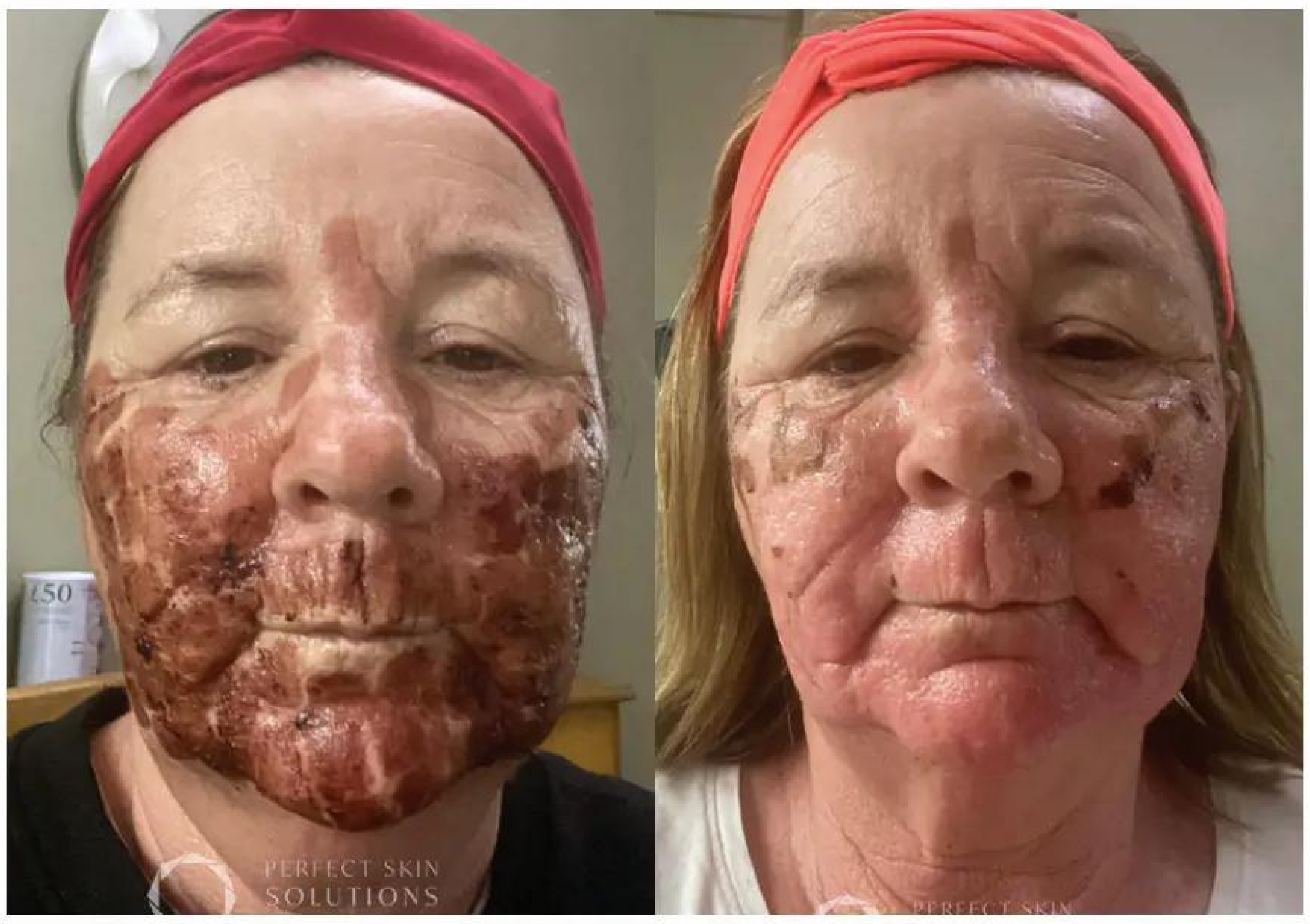
3. **Synthetic growth factors (Biofermentation):** Most modern growth factors are produced synthetically through biofermentation. In this method, genetically engineered microorganisms such as bacteria or yeast are used to produce growth factors identical to their natural counterparts. These growth factors are often denoted by the prefix "sh-" (synthetic human) in the INCI (International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients) list.[24]

APPLICATIONS IN PRE- AND POST-PROCEDURAL SKINCARE

Topical growth factors are invaluable in pre- and post-procedural skincare regimens. Pre-treatment with growth factors primes the skin, enhances resilience, and accelerates wound healing by promoting collagen synthesis and reducing postoperative complications.[25]



▲ **Fig 2: 2nd degree burns - seven days of a topical growth factor serum, twice daily.**



▲ **Fig 3: 48 hours of topical growth factors post-laser resurfacing with coring.**

Post-procedural application mitigates inflammatory responses, reduces downtime, and promotes angiogenesis and tissue repair. This ensures optimal outcomes, particularly in procedures such as laser resurfacing, micro-needling, and chemical peels.[26, 27]

ENHANCED COLLAGEN PRODUCTION THROUGH OPTIMISED HEALING

1. **Growth factors promote effective healing:** Topical growth factors enhance healing by accelerating cellular repair and regeneration. Rather than reducing collagen production, they enable more efficient and higher-quality collagen synthesis. Key growth factors such as IGF-1, EGF, and bFGF stimulate fibroblast activity and promote collagen production, which is vital for skin repair and rejuvenation.[28, 29]

2. **Reduced risk of excessive inflammation:** Prolonged inflammation can lead to excessive collagen deposition, increasing the risk of fibrosis or scarring. By modulating and controlling the inflammatory response, growth factors create a balanced healing environment, leading to a more uniform and desirable collagen matrix.[30]

3. **Patient comfort and satisfaction:** Faster resolution of inflammation reduces downtime, discomfort, and risks such as hyperpigmentation. This enhances patient satisfaction and supports optimal recovery outcomes, indirectly contributing to superior collagen formation.[31]

CONCLUSION

Topical growth factors represent a pivotal advancement in dermatology, offering multifaceted benefits for skin health and aesthetic outcomes. Their ability to promote wound healing, enhance anti-ageing regimens, and optimise procedural recovery underscores their transformative potential.

Moreover, incorporating growth factors into clinical practice fosters greater trust from patients. By reducing risks, enhancing safety, and improving procedural outcomes, we provide a more positive and satisfying experience. For some, growth factors as a stand-alone treatment offer a cost-effective, simple solution for improving skin health without the need for invasive procedures. This strengthens the therapeutic relationship and reinforces patient confidence in modern aesthetic care.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. **EGF (epidermal growth factor)** A growth factor that stimulates cell growth, proliferation, and differentiation by binding to its receptor (EGFR). It is critical for skin regeneration and repair.
2. **IGF-1 (insulin-like growth factor-1)** A hormone-like growth factor that promotes cell growth, survival, and collagen production, contributing to tissue repair and skin health.
3. **bFGF (basic fibroblast growth factor)** A growth factor that supports fibroblast proliferation, extracellular matrix production, and angiogenesis, essential for wound healing and tissue repair.
4. **aFGF (acidic fibroblast growth factor)** A growth factor involved in cell proliferation, differentiation, and angiogenesis, with applications in tissue regeneration and skin repair.
5. **VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor)** A signalling protein that promotes the formation of new blood vessels (angiogenesis), ensuring adequate oxygen and nutrient supply during skin regeneration.
6. **Ras/MAPK pathway (mitogen-activated protein kinase pathway)** A key intracellular signalling pathway that regulates cell growth, proliferation, and differentiation. It is activated by growth factor receptors like EGFR.
7. **PI3K/Akt pathway (phosphoinositide 3-kinase/protein kinase B pathway)** A signalling pathway involved in promoting cell survival, metabolism, and growth. It is essential for skin barrier repair and anti-apoptotic processes.
8. **JAK/STAT pathway (janus kinase/signal transducer and activator of transcription pathway)** A pathway activated by cytokines and growth factors, regulating immune responses, cell proliferation, and survival.
9. **Stratum corneum** The outermost layer of the epidermis, composed of dead skin cells and lipids, serving as the primary barrier to external substances.
10. **Paracrine effect** A form of cell signaling where cells release molecules that affect nearby cells, such as growth factors acting on adjacent skin cells.
11. **Double paracrine effect** A mechanism where topically applied growth factors stimulate keratinocytes to release secondary growth factors, which then signal fibroblasts to initiate repair processes.
12. **Extracellular matrix (ECM)** A network of proteins and carbohydrates, including collagen and elastin, that provides structural and biochemical support to cells.
13. **INCI (international nomenclature of cosmetic ingredients)** The standardised naming system for ingredients used in cosmetics and personal care products.
14. **Biofermentation** A process where genetically engineered microorganisms (e.g., bacteria or yeast) produce synthetic growth factors identical to natural human growth factors.
15. **Dalton (Da)** A unit of molecular mass, where 1 Dalton equals the mass of a single hydrogen atom. Molecules under 500 Daltons typically penetrate the skin.
16. **Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009** A European law governing the safety and composition of cosmetic products. It prohibits the use of human-derived cells or tissues in cosmetics.

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Mature Lips

A TAILORED APPROACH TO AUGMENTATION

Rosanne Joseph-Anthony discusses shifting the needle on lip trends, to achieve natural results for patients desiring a youthful look

Over the past decade, the prevalence of lip augmentation using injectable fillers has escalated significantly, positioning lip fillers among the most performed cosmetic procedures worldwide.[1] This surge is primarily attributed to the substantial influence of social media and celebrity culture, which have been primary catalysts for transformation within the aesthetic and beauty sectors. Influencers disseminate trending procedures and beauty ideals that consumers subsequently adopt.[2] Recent augmentation techniques, such as "Russian lips," "Bratz lip," and "Alien lips," have gained popularity among patients desiring pronounced lip volume and a distinctive aesthetic. However, as most trends and content are directed at a younger demographic, the desires and requirements of mature patients needs must also be adequately considered and addressed.

Both extrinsic and intrinsic factors — including nutritional status and genetic predisposition — significantly impact skin health and contribute to the ageing process. These factors lead to epidermal thinning, reduction of subcutaneous adipose tissue, flattening of the dermal-epidermal junction, and loss of elastin, collagen, and growth factors.[3] Age-related changes are particularly pronounced in the perioral region, resulting in lip thinning, loss of definition, and the formation of perioral rhytids (wrinkles). While these concerns are most prevalent among older individuals, they also affect those exhibiting premature signs of ageing due to excessive ultraviolet radiation exposure and detrimental lifestyle choices such as smoking. Despite the focus of most anti-ageing skincare products on facial skin, the lips often remain a neglected indicator of the ageing process.

Addressing the aesthetic needs of mature patients requires a nuanced approach that considers the anatomical and physiological changes associated with ageing. Techniques such as the strategic use of hyaluronic acid fillers can restore lip volume, enhance definition, and ameliorate perioral wrinkles, thereby addressing the specific concerns of this demographic. Furthermore, personalised treatment plans and patient education are essential for achieving optimal outcomes and high levels of patient satisfaction.

LIP AGEING

The process of lip ageing can be broken down into the following:

Degradation of collagen and elastin

Elastin fibres are a resilient component of the extracellular matrix (ECM), providing structural support to cells and tissues alongside other proteins. These fibres endow the skin with elasticity, allowing it to recoil when stressed. However, elastin exhibits a low turnover rate, limiting its synthesis and repair capacity. Over time, elastin fibres accumulate damage due to various biological influences, leading to fragmentation and thinning that adversely affect skin elasticity.[4] Consequently, with advancing age, lip tissue becomes less capable of returning to its original shape after stretching or manipulation, resulting in the wrinkling and sagging observed in and around the lips.

Collagen, the primary structural protein in the ECM, plays a crucial role in connective tissues by contributing to skin strength and elasticity. Natural collagen loss occurs through intrinsic ageing processes, and extrinsic factors such as ultraviolet radiation and environmental stressors. A significant reduction in collagen production is typically observed after the mid-twenties.[5] As collagen degrades and is not sufficiently replaced with age, the collagenous framework within the lip tissue diminishes, leading to a loss of structural integrity.

Cross-linking of collagen involves the formation of intra- and intermolecular covalent bonds between collagen molecules. Glycation — a non-enzymatic reaction where sugars bind to proteins — can induce cross-linking, forming advanced glycation end-products (AGEs). This process results in the stiffening and rigidity of collagen bundles, reducing skin elasticity and contributing to tissue stiffness in the perioral area.[6] The accumulation of AGEs is associated with age-related changes in skin appearance and function, further exacerbating the signs of ageing in the lips.

Epidermal thinning

Advancing age leads to thinning of the epidermis, primarily due to a decline in epidermal stem cell production and a reduction in keratinocyte proliferation.[7] This decreased cellular turnover impairs the skin's regenerative capacity. Combined with the loss of collagen throughout all layers of the skin and subcutaneous fat depletion, there is a gradual reduction in lip volume over time. The thinning epidermis also exacerbates transepidermal water loss (TEWL), resulting in increased dryness within the cellular layers and compromising the integrity of the epidermal barrier. Additionally, the age-related slowdown in cellular repair mechanisms prolongs the healing process of the lips, further aggravating moisture loss and dryness.[7 8]

Changes in vascularity and colour

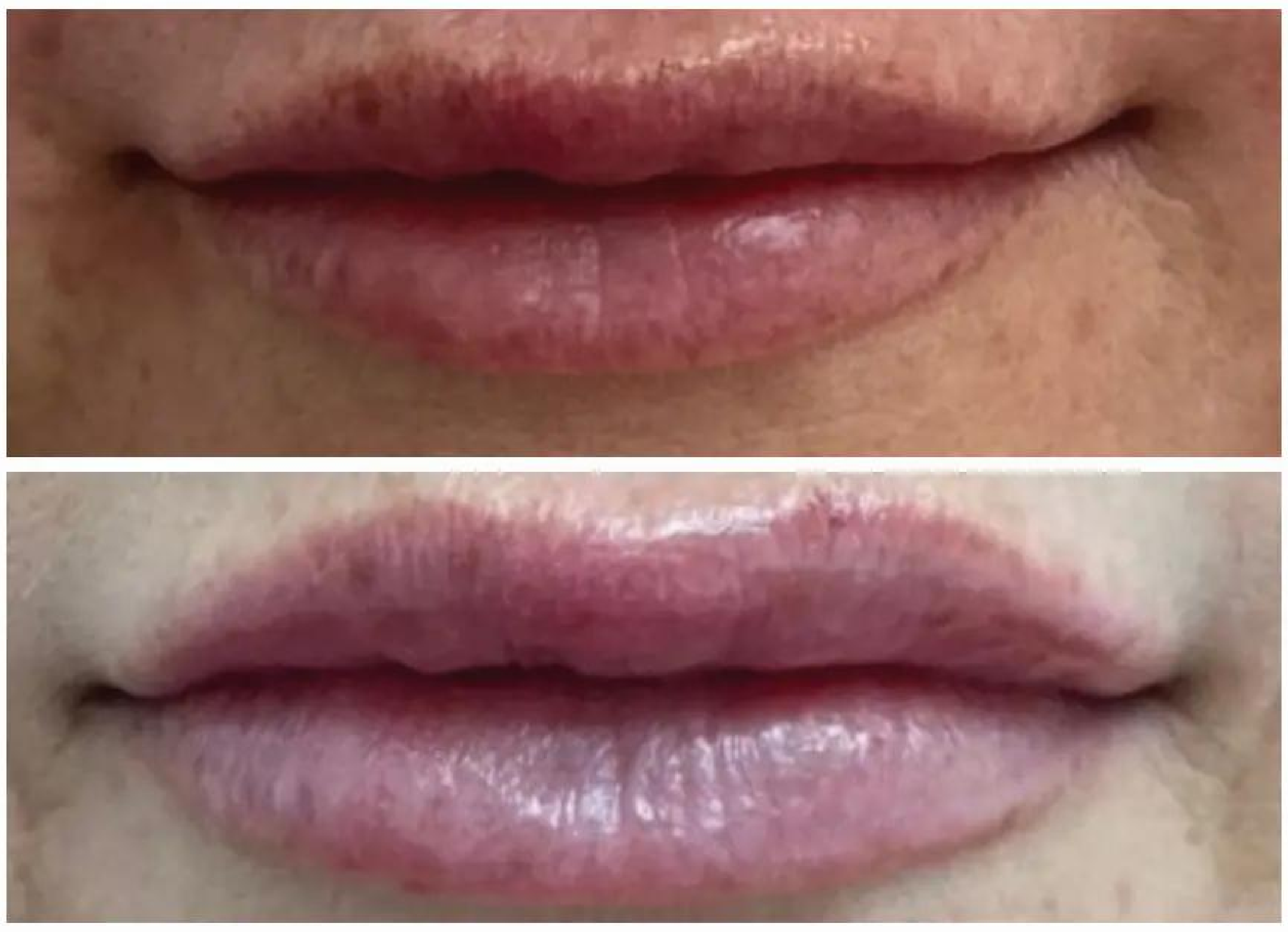
Age-related changes also affect the vascularity and colour of the lips. With advancing age, there is a reduction in capillary density and blood flow within the dermal layers. This decrease in microcirculation leads to diminished oxygenation and nutrient delivery to the tissues, resulting in a loss of the natural rosy hue characteristic of youthful lips.[9] The lips may appear paler and less vibrant, which not only affects aesthetic appearance but also contributes to delayed wound healing and increased susceptibility to environmental damage. Furthermore, the decline in melanocyte activity can lead to uneven pigmentation, causing hyperpigmented or hypopigmented areas on the lips. Addressing these vascular and pigmentary alterations is essential when formulating aesthetic interventions for mature patients, as treatments that enhance blood flow and restore natural colouration can significantly improve lip appearance and patient satisfaction.

The factors above contribute to the characteristic signs of ageing in the lips and other age-related changes in facial tissues and musculature. For instance, skin atrophy resulting from collagen loss during menopause is significantly more pronounced, intensifying the appearance of lines and wrinkles and exacerbated by the characteristic menopausal skin dryness.[10] The lengthening of the philtrum is facilitated by the gradual weakening of facial muscles, which reduces the vertical height of the lips that already have a diminishing structural framework. Combined with epidermal sagging, this can create the illusion of smaller lips.[11]

Inversion of the lip tissue can be attributed to volume loss, moisture depletion, and perioral muscle weakness. The result is thinner lips, where the lip tissue inverts into the oral cavity rather than projecting outward along the facial plane.[12]

The advent and increased utilisation of injectable treatments such as hyaluronic acid (HA) fillers, botulinum toxin type A, and polynucleotides have provided practical strategies to address these age-related concerns. HA fillers can restore lost volume, redefine lip contours, and enhance hydration due to their hygroscopic properties.[13] Botulinum toxin can relax hyperactive perioral muscles, reducing the appearance of perioral lines and preventing further muscle-mediated lip inversion.[14] Polynucleotides promote tissue regeneration and improve skin elasticity by stimulating fibroblast activity and collagen synthesis.[15] Collectively, these interventions enable patients to rejuvenate the lip area, correct asymmetry, and ameliorate deep grooves within the lip body, thereby counteracting the signs of ageing.

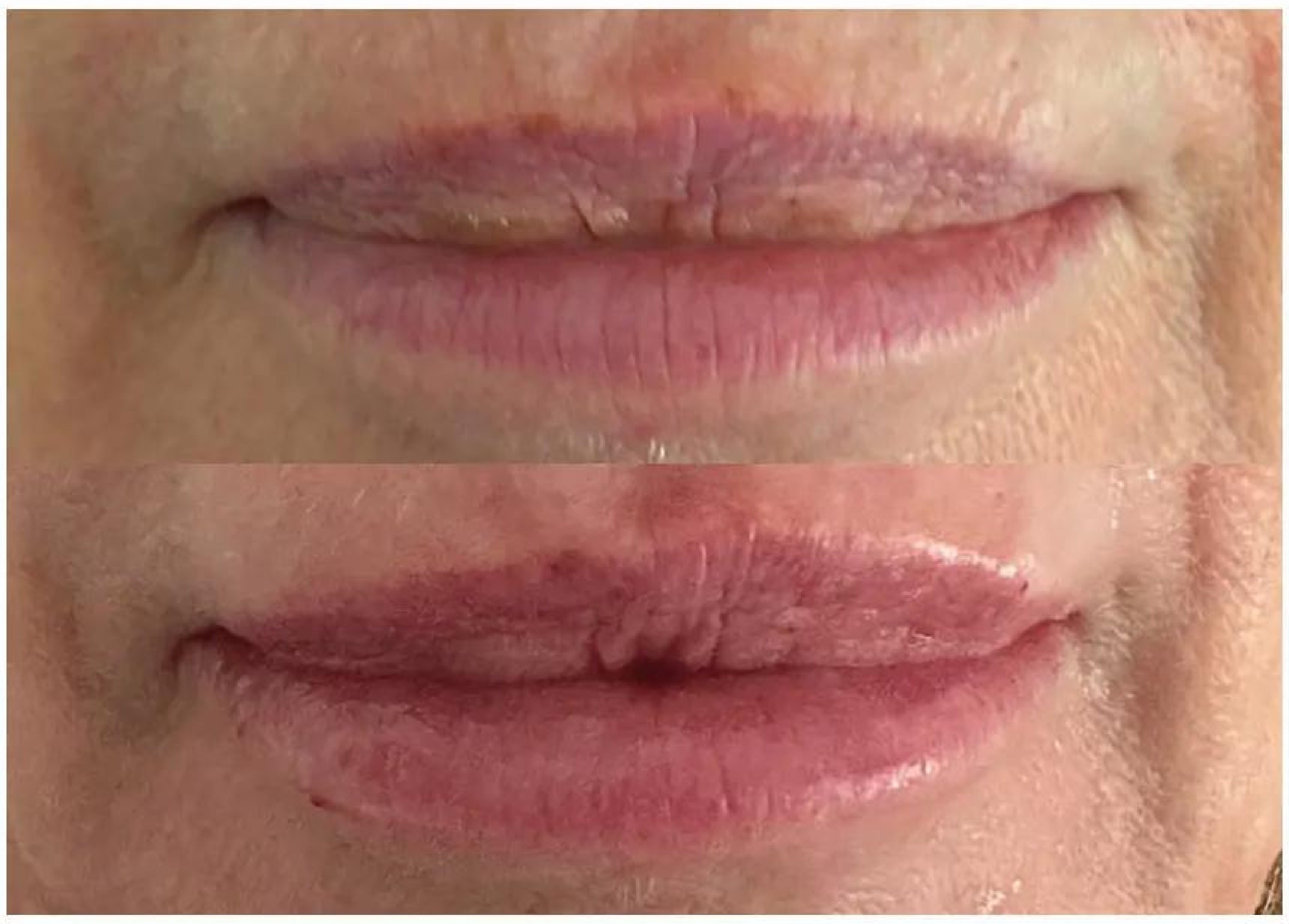
CASE STUDIES



▲ **Figures 1 and 2: Case study 1: Patient before and after treatment using HA filler to lips**

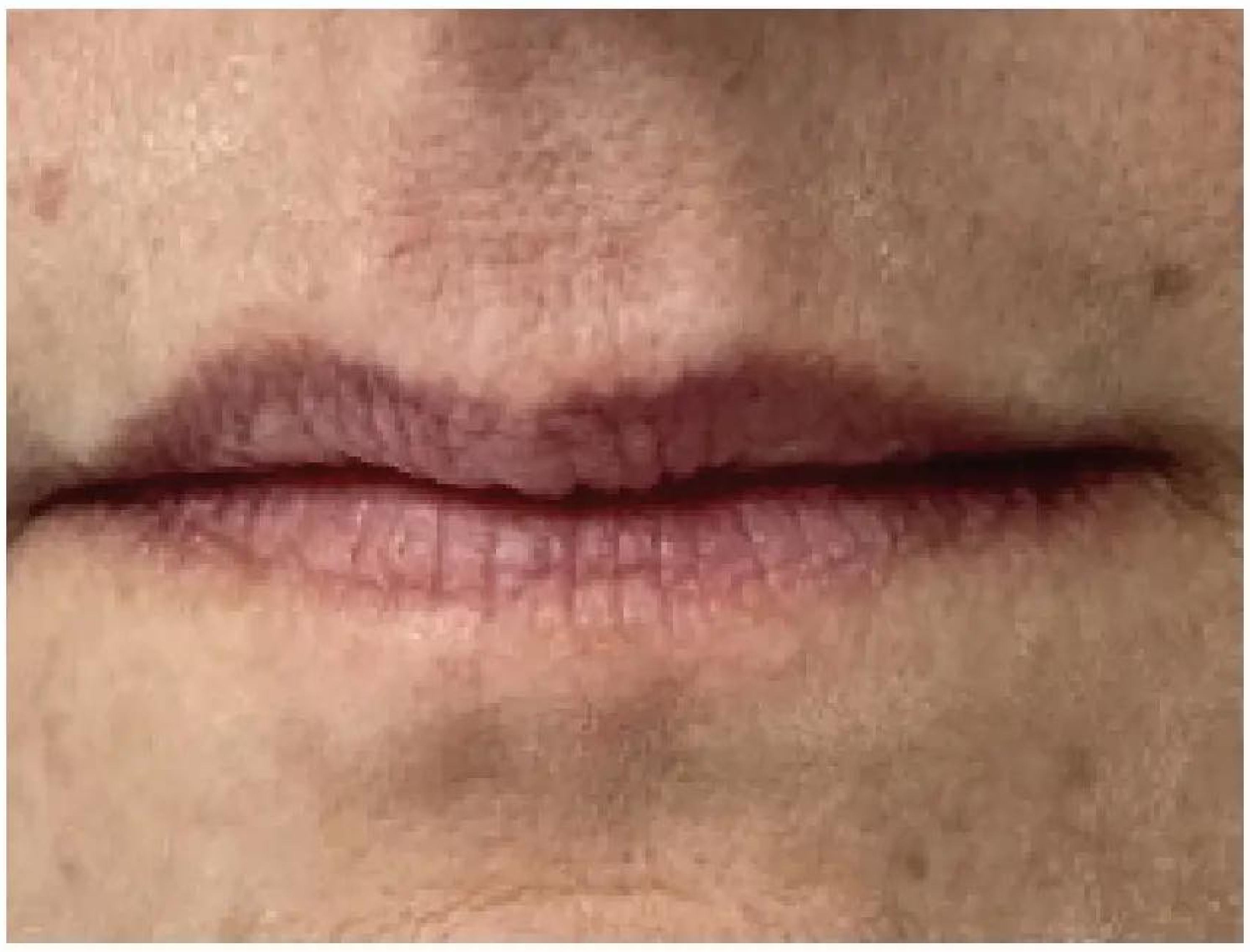
A 47-year-old female patient presented to the clinic, who explained that she wasn't satisfied with the result of her HA lip filler from a previous practitioner. She desired a more lifted look, concerned about volume loss in the lip due to menopausal hormone changes, but it was clear that a natural, polished look was the goal. On assessment of the patient's lips for evidence of the previous filler and overall anatomy for the procedure and opted for 1ml of Teosyal RHA KISS for the top and bottom lips combined. The filler was injected directly into the lips where appropriate using a 30-gauge needle, without cannulation, to allow better control of the product administration. The patient's lips were noticeably fuller along the vermillion borders leading to the oral commissures. A volume difference was noted, particularly by projection of the lower lip, with a visible smoothing of deeper lip grooves.

▼ **Figures 3 and 4: Case study 2: Patient before and after treatment using HA filler to lips**



Our second patient, a 62-year-old female, presented to the clinic who had also had HA filler previously. On examination, discovered a lump of HA during an ultrasound assessment that had migrated in the past on the left side of the patient's lip. The patient did not want the lump to be dissolved using hyalase; therefore, administered gentle massage techniques to assist in the degradation of the old HA filler. A year later, after the lump was assessed using ultrasound again, and had reduced considerably, 1ml of Teosyal RHA1 to the top and bottom lips combined. HA filler was administered as per case study 1. The patient desired a plumper lip, to maintain a natural but youthful appearance. The patient's lips were visibly fuller, volume was greater evenly across both lips, with a distinct reduction in peri-oral rhytids and wrinkles.

▼ Figure 5: Case study 3: Patient after treatment with botulinum toxin treatment to lips



A 49-year-old female patient presented to the clinic with post-menopausal changes to the skin and lip area. Patient did not want filler, as she preferred a subtle, natural looking result that would not be obvious to others in her line of work. On consultation with the patient and opted for Allergan's toxin, to evert the lip and demonstrate fullness where visibly the lip had become thinner and more inverted. As this was the patient's first treatment, it was advised that particular movements with the lips would be restricted post-treatment. Administered four units of Botox to the vermilion border using a 30-gauge needle, placing where appropriate for the desired outcome. This image was captured three weeks after the procedure to give enough time to assess the lip eversion. Lips were visibly more defined at the upper vermillion border, with a measurable height increase over both lips. Treatment had also corrected the patient's asymmetry at the cupid's bow.

PATIENT OUTCOMES ARE IN OUR HANDS:

A comprehensive patient consultation is essential for optimal lip augmentation procedure outcomes. It allows patients to express their concerns and discuss sensitive issues related to ageing, aesthetics, genetics, hormonal changes, and other personal factors affecting their lip appearance. Additionally, the consultation enables practitioners to identify and diagnose existing lip conditions, address complications from previous treatments, and tailor interventions to the individual's specific needs. Critically, this dialogue facilitates aligning and managing patient expectations, ensuring that desired results are realistic and achievable. By thoroughly exploring treatment options and mitigating patient apprehensions, potential adjustments to the treatment plan can be made before any procedure is undertaken.

Maintaining satisfactory results requires regular assessments, patient education on lip care, adherence to post-injection protocols, and standard follow-up consultations to ensure the patient's well-being and satisfaction with the outcomes. Aligning expectations during follow-up visits is also essential, as it allows for addressing any concerns and making necessary adjustments to sustain and enhance the achieved results. In these case studies, we worked closely with the patients to realise their desired outcomes, carefully assessing facial structure and musculature to achieve harmonious results for those opting for subtle enhancements over more pronounced effects.

ROSANNE JOSEPH-ANTHONY

Rosanne Joseph-Anthony is the founder, clinical director, and leading aesthetic nurse practitioner at Healthium Clinics. With over thirty years of experience as a registered general nurse, she has specialised in intensive care and cardiac care nursing and holds a particular interest in injectable-based aesthetics. Joseph-Anthony is a qualified trainer and assessor in clinical practice and provides education and support to health professionals worldwide.

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3. TransformX: body sculpting meets muscle toning

TransformX offers the ultimate body-sculpting experience by combining radiofrequency with muscle electrostimulation (EMS). This dual-action technology not only reduces fat but also tones and strengthens your muscles simultaneously. Ideal for those seeking to recover from muscle loss, TransformX sculpts your body in a way that exercise alone cannot achieve. Imagine achieving firmer abs, toned arms, and sculpted thighs – all without breaking a sweat!

4. Define: precision redefined for facial aesthetics

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Understanding LICHEN SCLEROSUS

Lichen sclerosus is often overlooked, but a new clinical trial is aiming to improve awareness and treatments for the skin condition. Contributing reporter **Ellen Cummings** explores the issue

Lichen sclerosus (LS) is a chronic inflammatory skin condition that predominantly affects the genital area which is widely misunderstood and frequently misdiagnosed. As International Women's Day falls in March, the conversation around women's health is more relevant than ever, making it the perfect time to shed light on LS – a condition that disproportionately impacts women and often leaves sufferers feeling isolated and unheard.

Dr Shirin Lakhani, a GP, aesthetics practitioner, intimate health expert and founder of Elite Aesthetics in Kent, is on a mission to change this. Currently leading a clinical study exploring new treatment options, she is determined to improve the standard of care for LS sufferers and raise awareness about a condition that has long been overlooked.

ISSUES WITH DIAGNOSIS

LS primarily affects women, although men are also susceptible. Symptoms of the condition include white patches on the vulva, itching, burning and tearing of the skin. One of the most troubling symptoms is the intense and unrelenting itch that can interfere with daily activities, from wearing certain clothing to simply going about day-to-day life.

Dr Lakhani, who is an expert in treating LS, explains, "LS is not something that people talk about an awful lot. It's a skin condition that mainly affects the genital area – the vulva, perineum and anal area in women. In men, it affects the penis, particularly the foreskin, but it can also occur on the shaft and glans."

Unfortunately, LS is not easily diagnosed, and many patients are misdiagnosed with conditions like thrush, as their symptoms can initially resemble fungal infections – and the conditions can coexist. As Dr Lakhani points out, "Women who experience symptoms tend to go to their doctors and get misdiagnosed as thrush. This is one of the things I wanted to raise awareness about."

RAISING AWARENESS

Amy Ford, a 33-year-old mother-of-one from Essex, is one of the many women who have struggled to receive a proper diagnosis for LS. After experiencing persistent symptoms, including intense itching and painful skin patches, she was initially misdiagnosed with thrush. Despite her growing discomfort, her GP continued to prescribe antifungal treatments, even though they did not improve her condition. "I felt like I had been dismissed and was confused and upset," Ford recalls.

After six weeks, Ford returned to the hospital and saw a different consultant. "He took one look at me and said he didn't know what I was worrying about but that I just had an irritated vulva and to use some vaginal moisturiser. He said it didn't look like LS but

I could have a biopsy to put my mind at rest," she says.

Ford then had the biopsy, followed by a letter from the consultant, which said, "I am pleased to confirm you have a condition called LS and I will now remove you from the cancer pathway."

Ford says, "I found the choice of words very bizarre, especially when he initially had categorically said I didn't have LS, but then told me he was pleased to confirm my diagnosis. Having the condition is bad enough but being made to feel silly and dismissed by the doctor made it so much worse."

Ford's experience mirrors that of many LS sufferers. Dr Lakhani emphasises that the condition is often under-recognised and under-reported. She explains that "LS can be very difficult to diagnose, and too many women are suffering without the appropriate care or recognition".

Dr Lakhani advocates for a more thorough understanding of LS within the medical community. She stresses, "If left untreated, LS can destroy the architecture of the vulva, causing fusion of the tissue. The clitoris can become completely buried, and the vaginal opening can become narrow or completely fused, making it difficult to urinate or have intercourse. This condition can progress to cancer if left unchecked."

THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF LS

Aside from the physical discomfort of LS, many women also experience psychological distress. The condition often causes a significant decline in the quality of life, including affecting sexual relationships and social interactions.

For Ford, this has been one of the most challenging aspects of the disease, with her often struggling to play with her two-year-old daughter due to the discomfort, which has also affected her career: "I was in a lot of pain all the time, severely itchy and severely sore. I had just started a new job, and I was crying every day before work and felt awful mentally and I cut myself off socially from others," she says.

Dr Lakhani recognises the emotional toll that LS can take. "The psychological impact of LS is significant," she says. "It affects relationships, mental health and self-esteem. People are often made to feel embarrassed or ashamed of the condition because it affects such an intimate part of their body. It's crucial that we create more awareness and open the conversation around it."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER CARE

There is currently no cure for LS and it's unclear what causes it, but the condition can be managed. Ford's condition deteriorated despite her repeated visits to doctors, and it was only after finding Dr Lakhani through an LS Facebook support group that she started to see improvement. Dr Lakhani, who is currently conducting a clinical trial to explore new treatment options for LS, is leading the way in investigating alternative therapies that could help manage the condition more effectively.

One such promising treatment is fractional radiofrequency (RF) and microneedling, specifically InMode's Morpheus8V device. Dr Lakhani explains, "Current treatment options for LS include topical corticosteroids, immunomodulators, and sometimes surgical interventions, but there is a need for alternative therapies. Morpheus8V is a promising treatment that combines fractional RF with microneedling. Our clinical trial aims to evaluate its efficacy in the management of LS."

For Ford, who is currently participating in Dr Lakhani's clinical study, this treatment has offered some relief. "After the first treatment, I felt like I was doing really well," she says. "I am not expecting a miracle cure, but I would like to relieve some of the symptoms and for people to listen."

Dr Lakhani's clinical trial aims to explore new avenues for treatment, with the goal of improving outcomes and developing evidence-based treatment guidelines. Dr Lakhani's determination to provide more effective care and her advocacy for increased awareness are making a significant difference for women like Ford.

"We need to raise awareness about this condition, and we need to ensure that more doctors take it seriously," Dr Lakhani insists. "There is not enough being done for sufferers, and we need more research and better treatment options."

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

As we mark International Women's Day, it is essential to recognise that conditions like LS deserve more attention. The stigma surrounding intimate health issues often prevents women from seeking help, and when they do, they are too often dismissed.

Dr Lakhani's research represents a step forward, but there is still a long way to go. Raising awareness, improving education for healthcare professionals and ensuring better treatment options are all vital in transforming the landscape of LS care.

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SABIKA *Says*

Columist **Dr Sabika Karim**
considers ethical problems in the UK medical aesthetic industry from a doctor's perspective

Over the past two decades that I have been a part of the medical aesthetic industry in the UK, it has seen rapid growth with increased demand for non-surgical treatments. While these treatments can improve self-confidence and psychological well-being, they also present significant ethical challenges. This article explores key ethical issues in the industry from my perspective as an aesthetic doctor.

1. Lack of regulation and standardisation
One of the most pressing concerns is the absence of stringent regulation. Unlike other areas of medicine, in England aesthetic procedures are often performed by individuals with little or no medical training. Non-medical professionals, including beauty therapists, can legally administer treatments like dermal fillers without oversight, despite the risks of infection, vascular occlusions, and even blindness. The ethical question remains: *should non-medical practitioners be allowed to perform these procedures?*

Additionally, any business can call itself a "clinic" without being registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) or having a medical lead. This lack of oversight means many aesthetic businesses operate without accountability, endangering patient safety. Mandatory licensing and training for all practitioners should be a priority to ensure ethical standards.

2. Exploitation of vulnerable patients
Aesthetic medicine exists in a grey area between healthcare and beauty. While it can boost self-esteem, it may also exploit vulnerable individuals, particularly those with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) or low self-esteem.

It is troubling when patients seek repeated procedures or have unrealistic expectations that make them unsuitable candidates. We must screen for psychological vulnerabilities and refer at-risk patients to mental health specialists.

3. Over-promotion and the role of social media
The rise of social media has transformed the aesthetic industry, making treatments more acceptable and mainstream but has also contributed to unrealistic beauty standards. Many influencers and non-medical practitioners promote procedures irresponsibly, often ignoring advertising standards. A major ethical breach is the illegal promotion of prescription-only medicines like botulinum toxin, which should only be prescribed after a consultation with a qualified medical professional.

As an aesthetic doctor, I have seen patients seeking treatments based on filtered or edited images, creating unrealistic expectations. Ethical practitioners should ensure that patients make informed decisions and understand the expected results and the risks. We must resist the temptation to exploit social media trends and instead focus on educating the public about responsible and safe aesthetic medicine.

4. Pricing and accessibility

High-quality treatments by trained medical professionals are often expensive, leading many individuals to seek cheaper alternatives from unregulated practitioners. This creates a two-tiered system where only the wealthy can afford safe, ethical treatments, while others take risks with unqualified injectors.

Some businesses also use persuasive marketing tactics, such as limited-time offers, encouraging impulsive decisions rather than patient-centred care. A balance between accessibility and ethical medical practice must be maintained, possibly through government-led regulation of pricing and training standards.

5. Over-treatment and the “frozen face” culture

The pursuit of perfection has led to an over-treatment trend, where individuals seek excessive procedures, resulting in unnatural appearances.

As a doctor, I frequently encounter patients requesting treatments they do not need. Ethical dilemmas arise when deciding whether to refuse such procedures or proceed, knowing they will likely go elsewhere. While patient autonomy is important, educating patients about subtle, natural enhancements should be a priority.

6. Patients vs. clients: the medical duty of care

A key ethical distinction in the aesthetics industry is between a “patient” and a “client.” In the beauty industry, individuals are clients who choose treatments based on preference. However, in medical aesthetics, they are patients who rely on professional expertise for diagnosis, treatment, and safety.

As medical professionals, we have a duty of care that extends beyond customer satisfaction. Ethical practitioners must prioritise patient safety over commercial interests.

7. Transparency about qualifications

One emerging ethical concern is the misrepresentation of qualifications within the aesthetic industry. Some practitioners use the title “Dr” despite not being medical doctors, misleading patients into believing they are being treated by a physician. For instance, individuals with PhDs in non-medical fields may market themselves as “Dr” without clarifying their actual credentials. This lack of transparency can deceive patients into trusting providers who may not have the necessary medical expertise to provide treatments and handle complications safely.

I believe that ethical practitioners should always be upfront about their qualifications, ensuring patients are fully aware of their level of medical, dental or nursing training. We are better qualified to provide these treatments that the nail tech or hairdresser. Clear and honest communication about credentials helps build trust and allows patients to make informed choices about their treatments.

8. Complications and accountability

Unlike the NHS, where clear structures exist for managing complications, private aesthetic clinics often operate independently. If a patient experiences a serious complication from a poorly administered treatment, they may struggle to receive proper aftercare.

Medical professionals frequently treat complications caused by others, assuming responsibility for prior errors. Despite this, as doctors, I feel we have a duty of care to patients in need, even when the situation is not of our making.

9. The ethics of treating young patients

The rise of social media has driven an increase in aesthetic treatment requests from younger individuals, many of whom have no medical need for intervention.

Treating young patients irresponsibly can contribute to body image issues and unnecessary medicalisation of natural ageing. Ethical doctors must educate younger patients about risks and promote self-acceptance rather than unnecessary enhancements.

CONCLUSION

The UK medical aesthetic industry faces significant ethical challenges. As an aesthetic doctor, I believe patient safety and well-being must always take precedence over commercial interests. While aesthetic medicine is a rewarding field, practitioners must navigate complex ethical dilemmas with transparency and responsibility to uphold the integrity of the industry.

DR SABIKA KARIM

Dr Sabika Karim, founder of Skin Medical, is a multi-award-winning international educator who combines her NHS GP background with 19 years of aesthetic medical practice to deliver gold standard treatments to her patients at the clinic whilst raising industry standards by teaching and training her peers.

Conflict of Interest Statement – The views expressed are solely my own and have not been influenced or sponsored by any external parties. For full transparency, I am a key opinion leader (KOL) for Sinclair Pharma, Cellese, Evolus, Dermalux, and Erchonia.

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ETHICS IN *longevity*

Viviana Botoaca talks to editor **Anna Dobbie** about her aims to create the first sustainable clinic

By merging her expertise in longevity with a passion for philanthropy and sustainability, Viviana Botoaca has founded a longevity clinic to transform communities as well as patients. From genetic testing for personalised health plans to its unique partnership with an ocean-cleaning charity, Geneviv Clinic is redefining what it means to be a healthcare provider in today's world.

FROM A VISION TO REALITY

The idea for Geneviv Clinic and its philanthropic arm Geneviv Empower began with a simple realisation: healthcare should be accessible, sustainable, and holistic. Two years ago, Botoaca decided to combine her experience running longevity clinics with a deep commitment to making a difference. That's when the concept of both the clinic (which is in the process of getting CQC registered) and the charity was born.

Botoaca's journey into philanthropy started when she explored the potential of non-surgical treatments. After learning about InMode's Empower device, which offers body contouring without the need for surgery, she saw an opportunity to extend these advanced technologies to women who might not otherwise be able to afford them:

"I thought, how can we help the people who need this the most but can't pay for it?" This sparked the creation of Geneviv Empower, a charity aimed at supporting underprivileged women, particularly those who have suffered from trauma or lack access to proper healthcare.

A LIFELINE FOR THE VULNERABLE

Geneviv Empower is designed to assist those in need by offering non-invasive treatments, genetic tests, and hormonal analysis, focusing on women. Botoaca's mission is to address multiple stages of life, from young mothers dealing with post-pregnancy changes to elderly women struggling with urinary incontinence and menopause. By offering these services free of charge, the clinic aims to step in where traditional healthcare systems often fall short.

Geneviv offers genetic testing to predict potential health risks, such as obesity, insulin resistance, or celiac disease. By catching these conditions early, the clinic can provide preventative care.. Genetic tests can offer insights into how the body processes food, helping make more informed nutritional choices that could prevent long-term health issues like heart disease, diabetes, or anxiety. "Obesity isn't just about eating too much or moving too little," she says. "It's about genetics, lifestyle, and the environment." By addressing these factors early, Botoaca believes she can give people a better chance at a healthier future.

THE SUSTAINABLE CLINIC

Botoaca's commitment to sustainability extends beyond the clinic's charity work. In addition to offering charitable services, Geneviv Clinic is built around the principle of sustainability. It is the first clinic in its area to implement sustainable practices, removing five pounds of ocean trash for every treatment or product sold. This initiative is done in partnership with 4Ocean, a charity dedicated to cleaning the oceans and protecting marine life.

The partnership is more than just a donation; it's a way for the clinic's patients to feel like they are part of something bigger. Each patient receives a bracelet made from recycled ocean plastics as a reminder of the positive impact their treatment has on the planet. "It's not just about taking care of yourself – it's about taking care of the world around you," Botoaca adds.

While sustainability can be challenging in an industry reliant on consumables like plastic and single-use materials, Botoaca has managed to find a balance. Working with sustainable materials in the clinic's design, she's made conscious choices to reduce waste and minimise the environmental footprint: "We are trying to do the right thing with what we can control. We can't fix everything, but if we all do a little, it becomes a lot."

THE POWER OF GENETICS

One of the most unique aspects of Geneviv Clinic is its use of genetic testing to provide a highly personalised approach to health and wellness. This is especially important for Botoaca who believes in the power of tailored treatments.

"Nutrition isn't one-size-fits-all," Botoaca notes. "What works for one person may not work for another." The clinic uses genetic testing to offer personalised diet and lifestyle recommendations based on factors like thyroid health, insulin resistance, and vitamin deficiencies. "We are all unique," she says. "Genetics plays a huge role in how our body responds to food, stress, and exercise."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Botoaca's work isn't done alone. She's actively seeking partnerships with other charities and organisations to expand the reach of Geneviv Empower. She's particularly interested in collaborating with groups like Refuge, a charity for women fleeing domestic violence, to ensure the clinic's services reach those who need them most.

Her aim is to build a strong network of clinics and professionals who share her vision. This could involve expanding Geneviv Empower to more cities, offering more treatments and expanding access to underprivileged communities.

"I would love to see this grow," Botoaca says. "It's not just about one clinic – it's about creating a movement."

MORE CLINICS, MORE IMPACT

Botoaca's plans are ambitious. She envisions opening additional Geneviv clinics across the UK, each one focusing on sustainability and healthcare for vulnerable populations. As the clinic grows, so too will the impact of Geneviv Empower.

In addition to the charity's work, Botoaca is considering expanding her sustainable initiatives to include tree planting programmes, alongside the ongoing effort to clean the oceans. She's passionate about leaving the world in a better place, for her children and for the future generations who will benefit from the changes she's helping to instigate.

"We're not here just to treat people," Botoaca says. "We're here to make a change." Through her innovative work at Geneviv Clinic, it's clear that Botoaca is already making that change, one patient, one treatment, and one environmental initiative at a time. AM

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The Princess and the PRP

Regenerative expert, nurse **Claudia McGloin** answers all your burning questions

CLAUDIA MCGLOIN
Claudia McGloin is a registered nurse and holds dual registration in both the UK and Ireland. With over 27 years' nursing experience, McGloin is the clinical director and nurse practitioner at The New You Clinic in Sligo. She is one of Ireland's leading platelet-rich plasma experts and has performed thousands of PRP treatments. She has shared her expertise on the international stage and in various publications.

A hot topic with platelet-rich plasma (PRP) over the years has been whether or not PRP should be activated prior to injection. Activation refers to stimulating the platelets to release their bioactive substances by introducing agents like calcium chloride or thrombin. Although some PRP kits contain activation agents, many do not, and the decision of whether to activate PRP before injection comes with both advantages and disadvantages.

Activating PRP before injection can enhance the release of crucial growth factors like platelet-derived growth factor (PDGF), vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), and transforming growth factor-beta (TGF-β). These proteins play a critical role in wound healing, cell migration, and tissue regeneration. When PRP is activated, platelets degranulate and release these growth factors in higher concentrations, which can potentially amplify the regenerative effects on damaged tissues. This boost in growth factor release accelerates healing by enhancing processes like collagen synthesis, angiogenesis, and the formation of extracellular matrix components. For chronic or degenerative conditions, activating PRP before injection can lead to faster, more efficient tissue repair. Another benefit of activating PRP is the potential for faster healing and recovery. The immediate release of growth factors help to promote the healing process straight after injection. This is particularly useful in patients with tendon injuries, ligament sprains, and osteoarthritis. Research has shown that patients who receive activated PRP tend to experience quicker pain relief and improved functional recovery compared to those who receive non-activated PRP. The rapid release of growth factors can not only stimulate tissue regeneration but also help reduce inflammation more efficiently, leading to quicker recovery times and an expedited return to normal activities.

In addition, activation helps form a fibrin matrix, which provides a structural scaffold that supports cell attachment and promotes tissue regeneration. This fibrin network is particularly important in musculoskeletal injuries, where structural support is essential for healing. The enhanced formation of the extracellular matrix through activation could result in more effective and organised tissue repair, especially in soft tissues like tendons and ligaments, which typically heal more slowly. Activated PRP may also have synergistic effects when combined with other regenerative treatments, such as stem cell injections, hyaluronic acid, or corticosteroids, resulting in more sustained and effective healing for patients undergoing various regenerative treatments.

However, activating PRP prior to injection is not without its risks. One major concern is the potential for excessive inflammation. While inflammation is a necessary part of the healing process, it can be problematic if triggered too aggressively. The activation of PRP provokes an inflammatory response, which could worsen symptoms such as pain, swelling, and tissue damage. Non-activated PRP, where the release of growth factors is more gradual, may be a safer choice for these patients, as it may help prevent an overactive inflammatory response. Another issue with activating PRP is the risk of fibrosis. The growth factors released by PRP stimulate tissue repair, but if activation is excessive, it can lead to overproduction of collagen, increasing the risk of scar tissue formation. In patients with chronic injuries, where the healing process is already impaired, this excess collagen can result in fibrosis, which could hinder normal tissue function. In these cases, using non-activated PRP, which allows for a more controlled and prolonged release of growth factors, may help reduce the likelihood of fibrosis and result in better functional healing.

Once PRP is activated, the release of growth factors begins, and this process cannot be undone. Medical professionals need to act fast and inject straight away.

Ultimately, the decision of whether or not to activate PRP prior to injection depends on the clinical situation and the treatment goals. Medical professionals should carefully evaluate the patient's injury type, inflammatory status, and overall health to determine the most appropriate course of action. As more research is being carried out guidelines for the optimal use will likely emerge, allowing for more refined treatment protocols tailored to individual patient needs.

If you have questions regarding any aspect of regenerative medicine – PRP, PPP, PRF, polynucleotides, exosomes – or questions relating to treatments, please get in touch, either by contacting *Aesthetic Medicine* magazine or emailing claudia@thenewyouclinic.ie. AM

Reforming the CQC

TRACEY JONES

Tracey Jones began her career in 1996, training as a nurse and dedicating much of her professional life to neonatal intensive care. She later advanced to the role of clinical matron, overseeing four major departments. For the past two decades, Jones has transitioned into academia, first as a teaching fellow and then as a senior lecturer at a world-renowned university. In this capacity, she has presented at numerous UK and international conferences and has been widely published, including the release of her own academic book in 2020. Jones is also a senior fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has contributed to the development of educational modules for NHS England and the World Health Organization. For over 10 years, she has served as a clinical specialist advisor to the CQC and runs her own CQC-registered clinic, Blend Skin, in Cheshire, which she co-owns with her daughter, who is also a nurse.

Tracey Jones shares insights into Dr Penny Dash's review and the challenges of regulatory change

In early 2024, Dr Penny Dash was commissioned to conduct a comprehensive review of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the body responsible for regulating health and social care services in England. Later that year, the findings of her published review presented a stark and uncomfortable reality for the CQC, exposing critical limitations in its internal operations, the effectiveness of its assessment processes, and the capacity of the organisation to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

Dr Dash's review involved consultations with over 300 senior managers, clinicians, caregivers, and patients, in addition to staff working within the CQC itself. Her findings were alarming, with nearly all the individuals interviewed expressing significant concerns about the working practices and efficiency of the CQC. Many of these concerns were raised in the context of the CQC's ongoing efforts to integrate a new provider portal, a system which, despite its ambitious goals, proved to be deeply difficult to use. Additionally, providers raised concerns about the Single Assessment Framework (SAF), the CQC's regulatory platform, and its organisational structure all of which had been previously flagged by CQC staff themselves. These findings painted a picture of an organisation struggling to modernise and align with the evolving needs of both service providers and the public.

The need for an effective healthcare regulator, however, remains unquestionable. The CQC, like its counterparts in other devolved nations, plays a vital role in ensuring the quality and safety of healthcare services. However, as Dr Dash's review highlights, even well-intentioned regulatory bodies can face significant operational challenges that can then undermine their credibility.

THE CQC TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

In 2021, the CQC embarked on an ambitious transformation programme to modernise its approach to regulating health and social care services. The core objective of the programme was to make the assessment and inspection process more straightforward and data-informed, reducing unnecessary complexity and improving consistency. A key element of this transformation was the introduction of updated IT systems, a restructuring of operational inspection teams, and the rollout of a new regulatory model known as the Single Assessment Framework (SAF). For providers like me, particularly in medical aesthetics, these changes were viewed as a positive step forward. The introduction of a more transparent scoring system for inspections, based on clear evidence requirements, seemed to offer both greater clarity and a fairer system of rating. Under the SAF, inspectors are now required to justify their ratings using a scoring matrix, providing registered managers with guidance on improving and offering more transparency in how ratings are awarded. From a provider perspective, this scoring system represented a significant shift towards a more objective and evidence-based evaluation, which could be beneficial both for quality improvement and for understanding how to achieve higher ratings.

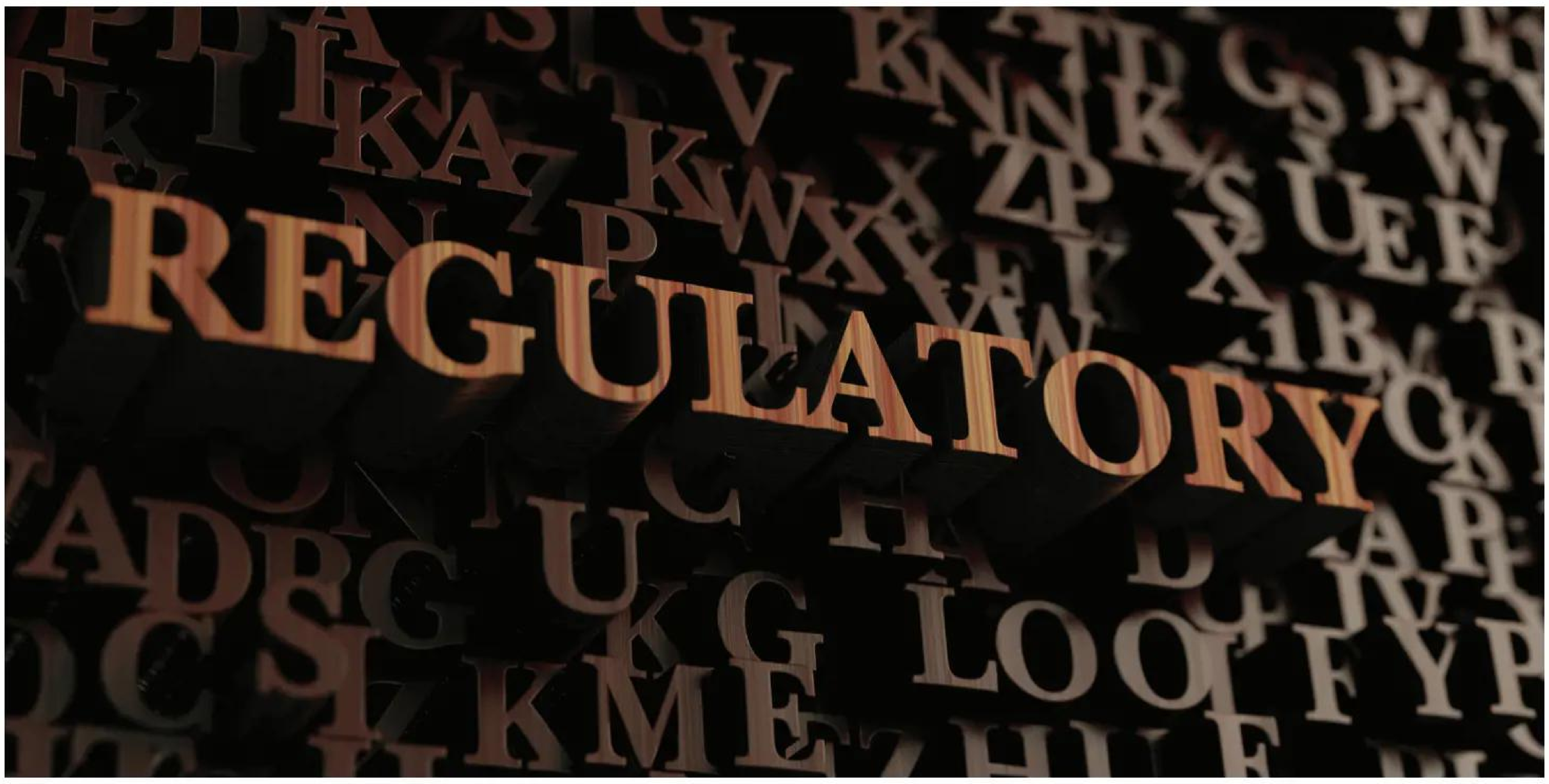
However, Dr Dash's review revealed that, despite the CQC's best efforts, these reforms have not been without their challenges. Internal failings have led to a loss of credibility of the CQC. The report found that the CQC's capacity to identify poor performance, drive improvements, and support providers effectively had significantly deteriorated. In my own experience as a director of a regulation consultancy company, I observed the consequences of these systemic failures firsthand. Applications that once took approximately 12 weeks to process were now taking as long as 12 months, resulting in significant personal, emotional, and financial strain on clients who were desperately waiting for their CQC registration to launch new businesses. This delay was exacerbated by the inefficiencies of the CQC's provider portal, which only added to the frustration of providers navigating an already complex regulatory environment.

In response to widespread feedback and a series of internal reviews, the CQC decided to close its existing application portal on November 18, 2024. The portal, which was designed to streamline the application process, was instead a source of frustration for many providers. Delays, misplaced applications, and difficulties navigating the system caused undue stress for those seeking to register or update their services with the CQC. As a result, the CQC has reverted to a manual process, requiring service providers to submit their applications and supporting evidence via forms available on the CQC website.

As of last November, all new applications or updates to existing registrations need to be submitted through the new manual process. The evidence required to support quality statements remains part of the application process, but it now needs to be integrated into the Statement of Purpose. While this shift is intended to create a more user-friendly system and reduce backlogs, it marks a significant step back from the CQC's initial attempts to modernise and simplify its application process. The portal, which had been promised as a key part of the CQC's plan to improve efficiency and reduce the administrative burden on both providers and the regulator, has instead failed to deliver. Some applications, including those for clients I have worked with, have taken up to 12 months to process, far from the CQC's goal of reducing response times and improving transparency.

THE NEED FOR A BALANCED REGULATORY APPROACH

The closure of the portal represents a critical turning point for the CQC, as it acknowledges that its efforts to modernise the regulatory process have not met expectations. The move back to manual forms may seem like a regression, but it also highlights the need for a more thoughtful and balanced approach to healthcare regulation. While technology and automation are essential in streamlining processes, they must be implemented in a way that is reliable, efficient, and accessible to the people who depend on them. Moreover, the issues identified in Dr Dash's report raise important questions about the future direction of how the CQC will regulate health and social care providers. This is the pinnacle of aesthetic medicine which will undoubtedly cause an increased workload for the CQC if the anticipated changes in regulation come to fruition. The challenges outlined in the review offer an opportunity for the CQC to reflect on its approach and to make meaningful changes that will ultimately benefit both service providers and the patients they serve. In my view, I do not see the CQC's purpose to solely enforce penalties, I see the regulatory body as a partner in care, an organisation that is invested in improving quality healthcare outcomes. A true "critical friend" is



someone who offers constructive feedback and guidance, helping providers like me identify areas of improvement and providing actionable steps to enhance the services I offer. In my experience, CQC inspections can be a valuable opportunity for growth. When a clinic team engage with regulation this can drive a collaborative and solution-oriented approach, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

As the sector continues to evolve, so too must the regulators. The goal should be to create a regulatory environment that is transparent, fair, and conducive to ongoing improvement, one that strikes a balance between oversight and support. For healthcare providers like myself, and those seeking to navigate the regulatory landscape, this balance will be key to ensuring that the CQC fulfils its mission of promoting safe, high-quality care for all. The closure of the CQC's portal and the return to manual applications marks the beginning of a new chapter in the ongoing evolution of healthcare regulation in England. It remains to be seen whether this shift will provide the clarity, efficiency, and support that service providers need to thrive in an increasingly complex healthcare environment.

As a nurse, regulation consultant, and the owner of a CQC-registered clinic, I have a unique vantage point when it comes to the role of healthcare regulators in aesthetic medicine. My expectation of the CQC, and any regulatory body, is simple; I want them to not only understand my service but also serve as a critical friend in helping to identify areas for improvement, ultimately ensuring that my patients receive the best possible care. The field of aesthetic medicine is undergoing significant changes. The demand for non-surgical cosmetic treatments continues to rise, and with that comes increased scrutiny and the need for clearer regulatory frameworks. As we await further guidance on the proposed licensing scheme for aesthetic practitioners, regulation remains in a state of flux. Despite the uncertainty, one thing remains clear: I will continue to maintain my CQC registration. For me, being registered with the CQC represents the pinnacle of assurance for my patients, a commitment to high standards of care and a mark of quality that instils confidence in those seeking services at my clinic.

WAITING FOR NEW GUIDANCE: A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Aesthetic medicine is in a period of transition. The proposed new licensing schemes for non-surgical aesthetic procedures are aimed at raising standards and providing clearer accountability across the industry. While many of us await the publication of these new guidelines, we understand the need for regulation that better reflects the complexity of the medical services we provide. These reforms aim to create a safer environment for patients and ensure that medical aesthetic treatments are carried out in the highest standard of care by medical professionals.

The CQC's registration process is not merely about compliance; it is a holistic evaluation of every aspect of a service, from governance, patient care and safety protocols. In an industry where there is currently no licensing framework and some practitioners jeopardise both their medical registration and credibility by offering services while being unregistered with the CQC, practices may not always adhere to the highest standards. CQC registration offers a crucial layer of reassurance for patients who might otherwise feel uncertain about where to seek their treatment.

As we await further clarification on the licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures, all practitioners in this field need to remain engaged with regulatory bodies like the CQC. The landscape is shifting, but the goal remains the same – to ensure that patients receive the highest standards of care. By continuing to embrace regulation, I believe we in the specialty of aesthetic medicine can help drive the changes necessary to raise standards and build a more professional, safe, and transparent industry.

As a nurse, I am proud to work within a regulatory framework that helps ensure my patients receive the best possible care, and I will continue to support efforts that raise the standard of care across the entire sector. In conclusion, while the world of aesthetic medicine is rapidly evolving, my commitment to patient safety and quality care remains unwavering. Staying CQC registered is an essential part of this commitment, and I believe that, through collaboration with regulators, we can ensure that this sector continues to grow in a safe, regulated, and patient-focused direction. The path forward may be uncertain, but by embracing regulation and remaining open to continuous improvement, we can provide the best possible care to those who entrust us with their health and well-being.

The challenges identified in Dr Dash's review reflect the complex nature of healthcare regulation and the need for constant adaptation. As the CQC looks to address its shortcomings and rebuild its credibility, any future reforms must prioritise both efficiency and fairness to serve as a robust and supportive regulatory body for the health and social care sectors. AM

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Shaping the FUTURE

Our **Women in Aesthetic Medicine** group addresses the brands in the aesthetics industry, demanding a commitment to supporting and championing women

TO THE BRANDS SUPPLYING THE MEDICAL AESTHETICS SECTOR,

The aesthetics industry is driven by innovation, expertise, and a commitment to excellence. At the heart of this thriving field are the practitioners – highly skilled, passionate professionals dedicated to delivering life-changing results for their clients.

Many of these experts are women. In fact, women make a significant part of the workforce in medical aesthetics as surgeons, doctors, dentists and nurses. Insurance brand Hamilton Fraser's annual survey of the industry saw a majority of female respondents, with 74.8% of 300 people being women.

Yet, they remain underrepresented in key leadership roles, advisory boards and as key opinion leaders shaping the future of the industry.

We believe it's time for meaningful change

As the brands that supply and influence this sector, you have a unique opportunity and responsibility to champion the women who are the backbone of this industry. We urge you to take active steps in ensuring that women have a greater presence and influence within the medical aesthetics space. Here's how you can help:

Increase female representation in KOL programmes

The professionals chosen to educate, influence, and represent brands should reflect the industry's workforce. By ensuring more women are invited to be key opinion leaders, you not only provide them with the recognition they deserve but also foster a more inclusive and dynamic educational landscape.

Offer leadership and mentorship opportunities

Establish initiatives that support women in advancing their careers, whether through mentorship programmes, scholarships, or leadership training. Providing structured pathways to leadership roles will create a more balanced and forward-thinking industry.

Showcase female experts at events and conferences

Industry conferences and brand-led events should be representative of the people they serve. Prioritising female speakers, panellists and educators will bring fresh perspectives and elevate the voices that are often overlooked.

Represent women in higher management

According to the *2022 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Beauty* report published collaboratively by the MBS Group, CEW UK and ScienceMagic.Inc, representation of women in beauty businesses is strongest at the direct report levels, with 59% women, but dips at the most senior levels of leadership. Women dominate the workforce in aesthetics, and the patient-base, so their influence should be imperative for the brands shaping the industry.

Highlight women in your marketing and campaigns

Representation in brand storytelling is powerful. Featuring female professionals in advertising, educational materials, and social media campaigns will help create a more authentic and relatable industry narrative.

Tracey Dennison, WiAM board member, nurse practitioner and owner of East Riding Aesthetics said, "I'm 100% dedicated to patient care, safety, education, and advancing standards in our industry, but for true progress, we need more than clinical expertise – we need real commitment to equality.

"Women make up a significant part of the aesthetics workforce (within and beyond the clinical arena), yet too often, there are barriers to leadership, recognition, and opportunity. This isn't just a women's issue; it's an industry-wide and cross-gender responsibility.

"I believe in fairness, mentorship, and lifting others up, and I call on brands to actively support and invest in the women shaping the future of medical aesthetics. Real change happens when we all work together and commit to making a difference."

We are not asking for token gestures – we are asking for genuine commitment to progress. The medical aesthetics industry thrives when it is built on equality, innovation, and shared success. We invite you to join us in making this vision a reality.

Let's work together to ensure that the future of aesthetics is not only shaped by women but also champions them at every level.

Sincerely,
Women in Aesthetic Medicine

WOMEN *in*

aesthetic
MEDICINE

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PARTNERING UP

Why practitioners benefit from joining a network

Independent practitioners often find themselves juggling both medical expertise and business management. Many doctors enter the field with a passion for patient care but soon find themselves overwhelmed with the administrative burden of running a clinic. Cosmetic Physician Partners (CPP) was founded to bridge this gap, offering doctors a partnership model that enhances their clinical practice while providing robust business support. *Aesthetic Medicine* spoke to the founders before their shareholder meeting at Prof Ali Ghanem's clinic to find out how joining a network could benefit practitioners.

THE GENESIS OF COSMETIC PHYSICIAN PARTNERS

CPP was created as an alternative to the traditional private equity model, ensuring that doctors – who are the primary value creators – retain control and equity in their businesses. Founded by experienced business leaders with a deep understanding of the medical aesthetics industry, CPP was designed to unite top-tier clinics, foster collaboration, and streamline operations. In just three years, the network has expanded to over 50 clinics across the United States, with plans to grow internationally.

A COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEM FOR EXCELLENCE

One of the greatest advantages for physicians of joining CPP is the ability to share knowledge and best practices with fellow top-tier professionals. Historically, when doctors attended industry conferences, they would exchange ideas, but true collaboration was limited. Within the CPP network, physicians are now playing on the same team, exchanging strategies, and leveraging data-driven insights to improve clinic performance.

The benefits of this collaboration include:

- **Operational efficiency:** Doctors can access a wealth of resources to improve hiring, marketing, staffing, and overall management.
- **Data-driven insights:** Clinics can benchmark their performance against others in the network to identify areas for growth.
- **Access to business experts:** Doctors receive support from seasoned professionals who specialise in running successful medical aesthetic clinics.

REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

For many physicians, the most significant advantage of joining a network like CPP is the ability to focus on patient care rather than business administration. Most clinics are relatively small and struggle to afford dedicated personnel for essential administrative tasks such as accounting, hiring, and regulatory compliance. As a result, doctors often rely on external firms, which can be costly and lack industry-specific expertise.

By joining CPP, doctors gain access to a centralised support system that handles these tasks efficiently. This allows them to spend more time mentoring junior associates, expanding their practice, and enhancing patient care. As one physician noted, within just 30 days of joining CPP, they were already able to dedicate more time to clinical excellence rather than administrative concerns.

A SUPPORTIVE AND ETHICAL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Beyond business support, CPP fosters a culture of collaboration and ethical practice. Unlike competitive environments where doctors operate in silos, CPP encourages inter-clinic referrals and case discussions. This ensures that patients receive the best possible care without conflicts of interest.

Furthermore, CPP is highly selective in choosing its partners. Clinics are invited to join through warm referrals, ensuring that only those with impeccable reputations become part of the network. This strict vetting process helps maintain the highest ethical and professional standards in the industry.

STRATEGIC GROWTH AND EXPANSION

Joining CPP also offers growth opportunities for clinics looking to scale. Whether a clinic wants to open new locations or refine its existing operations, CPP provides invaluable expertise in lease negotiations, architectural planning, and business expansion. The network's existing partners play an active role in identifying and recommending new members, fostering an environment of trust and mutual growth.

NAVIGATING ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The aesthetic medicine industry in the UK and Europe is currently facing economic challenges, with some of the largest providers struggling to stay afloat. However, CPP sees these challenges as opportunities to improve industry standards and transform struggling clinics into thriving businesses. By leveraging its experience in North America, CPP aims to bring stability, innovation, and best practices to the European market.

A DUAL APPROACH TO TRAINING

Education and training are paramount in the field, and CPP is committed to over-investing in these areas. According to its leadership, training can be categorised into two fundamental pillars: medical proficiency and business development. While most aesthetic practitioners demonstrate a high level of medical expertise, business training remains an area for growth. CPP aims to bridge this gap by equipping practitioners with essential business skills, such as conducting effective consultations, cross-referring treatments, and recognising opportunities that enhance patient care.

RAISING STANDARDS ACROSS THE BOARD

CPP does not seek to disrupt existing clinical methodologies but rather to refine and enhance them. By identifying best practices and successful treatment protocols from clinics within its network, CPP ensures that the highest standards are shared across the board. Its strategy includes implementing new protocols that improve patient outcomes, increase safety, and elevate operational efficiency.

One example of this commitment is the Mint Aesthetics model, which integrates a vast training library featuring over 100 educational videos covering everything from customer service to laser treatments. This model serves as a benchmark for CPP's own training initiatives, allowing practitioners within the network to learn from top-tier industry leaders.

COLLABORATION OVER COMPETITION

A common concern in professional networks is how specialists within the same field can coexist without direct competition. Having a network addresses this challenge with flexibility, ensuring that practitioners complement rather than compete with one another. A prime example is the Ghanem Clinic, where CPP facilitated the introduction of new procedures previously unavailable in the UK. Through partnerships with the General Medical Council and the Royal College of Surgeons, international experts have been brought in to enhance education and patient outcomes. This collaborative approach ensures that specialists work together, cross-refer patients, and ultimately improve the standard of care.

THE BUSINESS OF AESTHETIC MEDICINE

Understanding the competitive landscape is crucial, particularly in regions densely populated with aesthetic clinics. For instance, in London's Square Mile alone, there are over 100 medical aesthetic clinics. By selectively partnering with top-tier clinics and helping them refine their business operations, a network enables them to enhance efficiency and profitability without altering their brand identity. Like how Procter and Gamble supports individual brands under its umbrella, CPP provides structural support while allowing clinics to retain their unique ethos and customer experience.

A STRONG NETWORK OF INDUSTRY LEADERS

One of CPP's greatest strengths is its network of influential educators and trainers. With internationally recognised experts like Prof Ghanem, Dr Benji Dillon, Dr Jennifer Doyle, Mr Richard Scawn and Dr Priyanka Chadha, CPP offers unparalleled access to industry leaders. This network fosters a culture of shared expertise, where practitioners can learn from each other and implement best practices that drive business growth and superior patient outcomes.

CPP does not actively market itself, as its reputation and referral network naturally attract high-calibre practitioners looking to elevate their practice. By fostering a culture of continuous learning, business acumen, and collaboration, CPP is not just shaping individual clinics but elevating the entire aesthetic medicine industry.

For more information on how to join CPP, email Etienne Billette at **ebillette@cppclinics.eu.** AM

High-tech facials:
PHILOSOPHIA BOTANICA GOLD PEARL FACE RITUAL

Contributing reporter **Kezia Parkins** tries the trending treatment at Four Seasons Park Lane

THE LOWDOWN

This luxurious and holistic facial is a bit different from my usual treatment for this column, as it contains no devices. Instead, it combines facial mapping based on traditional Chinese medicine, meridian balancing, magnetic energy balancing, acupressure stimulation and a unique facial massage ritual that includes magnetic gold pearls.

THE EXPERIENCE

This was my first time visiting the Four Seasons spa and it is one of the most gorgeous I have seen. Located on the 10th floor, walking into the reception area with its curved finishings on a cloudless, winter day was breathtaking. The view over London was spectacular and, with the light streaming in, it genuinely felt like heaven. I got to sit peacefully and complete my consultation with a hot towel and herbal tea.

I could go on about the changing rooms for days: a curved continuum of the reception, wood and white, with everything you could ever need to refresh yourself. The treatment rooms boasted equally wonderful views.

My therapist Achara consulted with me more while in the treatment room, took me through some of the scents and properties of the Philosophia Botanica oils available and showed me the gold pearls, which were so beautiful and resembled gold caviar.

After a thorough cleanse, Achara showed me the Chinese medicine facial map and I learned that the frequent flare-ups I get on my cheeks could be down to issues with my gut.

A super hydrating mask was then applied to my face and neck. While this was doing its thing, Achara gave me a wonderful arm massage. After it was removed, an uplifting oil containing neroli was used for a facial massage. Being from Thailand, where therapists are revered for their technique, Achara has firm and dexterous hands that expertly sculpted my face. Then, she used a gold magnetic pen across my pressure points and along my lymphatic pathways. It felt cooling and refreshing, especially around my sinuses. She then used a copper gua sha sculpting spoon to gently stimulate the skin and its sub-dermal layers, to encourage the natural production of elastin and collagen. These tools are paired with gentle meridian massage techniques along with acu-beauty pressure points to improve circulation, enhance the skin's metabolism, relax strained facial muscles and lift and plump the skin.

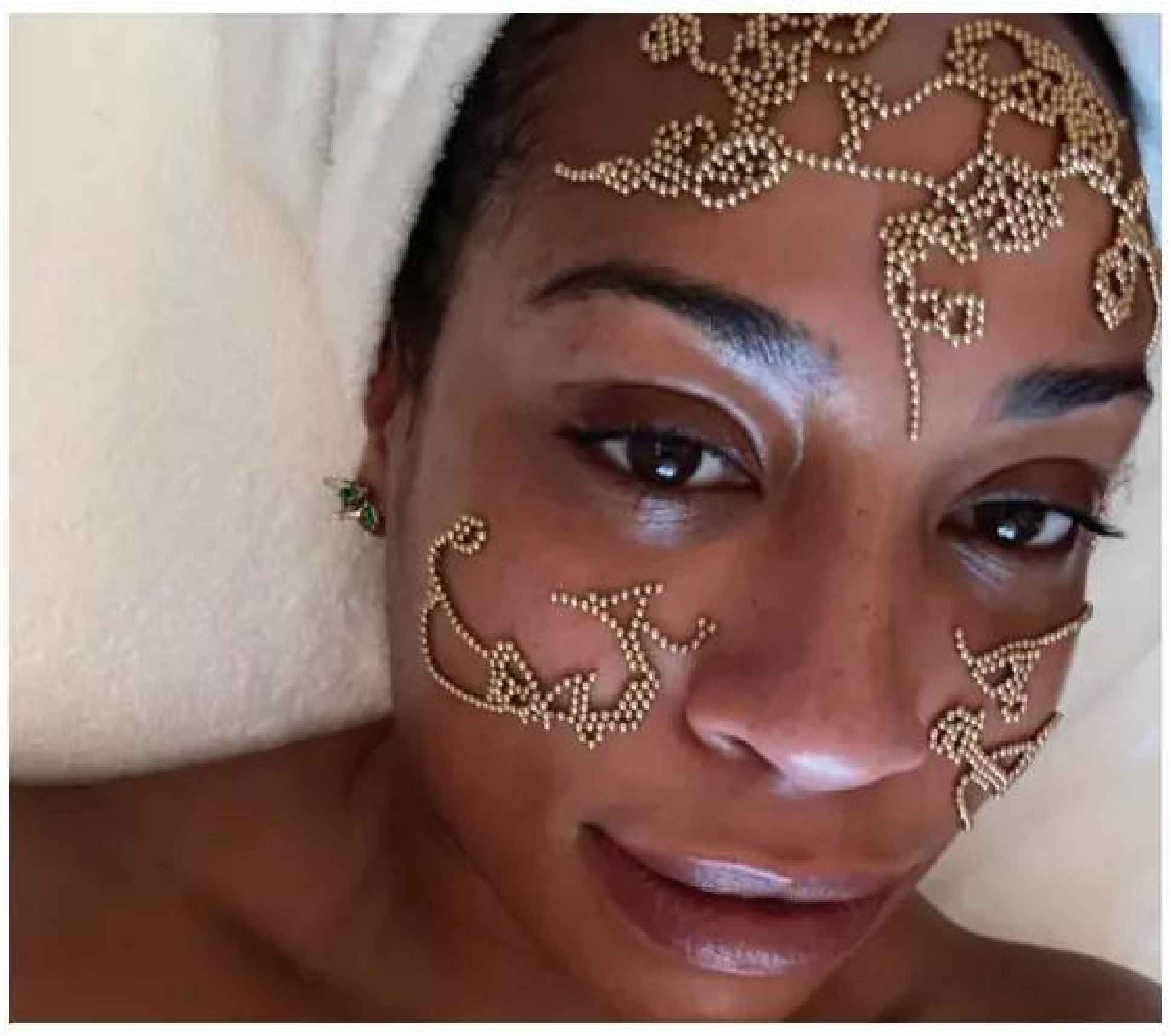
Then, it was time for the gold pearls, which she focused on applying to the acupressure points on my cheeks to target my stomach to improve my gut health. The pearls are then impressively removed with a swipe of the magnetic wand before the facial is finished with some nourishing ingredients.

THE VERDICT

This was a truly luxurious treatment that lifted not just my face, but also my spirits. I loved how it incorporated ancient wellness with Instagrammable elements. The beautiful setting added to the experience, making it one I will never forget. As well as being wonderfully regulating for the nervous system, my face genuinely looked more sculpted and smoother after.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

This treatment is so sharable, it will sell itself. It will really appeal to clients who are into wellness, holistic treatments or those who prefer to avoid devices. AM



Treatment review:

LASER HAND REJUVENATION

Account manager **Lisa Merrigan** visits **Dr Kathryn Taylor-Barnes** at Real You Clinic

THE LOWDOWN

The skin on our hands is one of the thinnest areas on our bodies and is subjected to rigorous skin stretching and sun exposure, making the loss of collagen much more noticeable. Therefore, it is one of the first places to show signs of ageing.

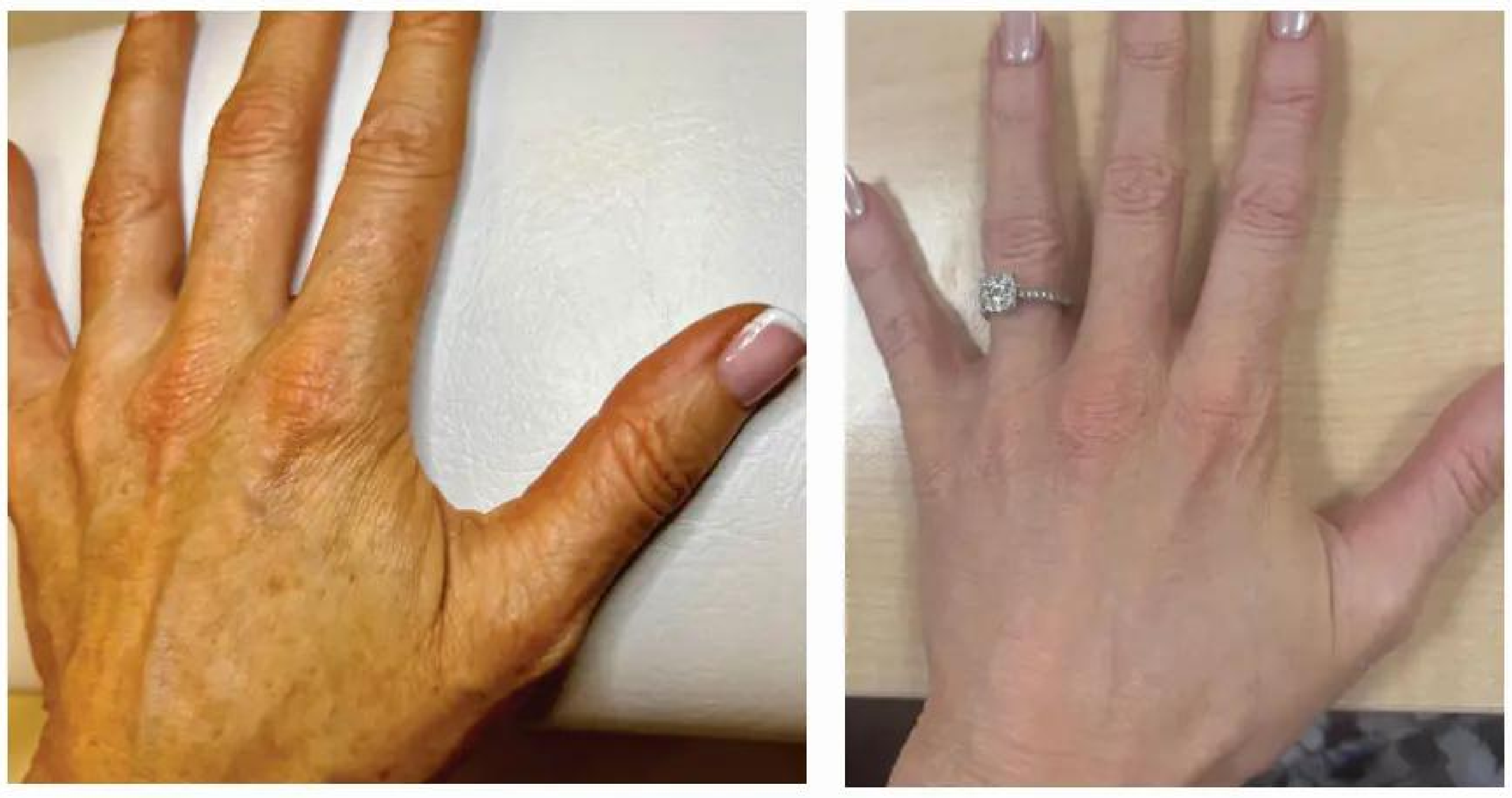
THE EXPERIENCE

Dr Kathryn Taylor-Barnes offers a bespoke combination laser rejuvenation package. This includes the Nordlys IPL and Frax systems and the Coollaser Erbium:YAG Skin Rejuvenation programme. She uses three different foundations, which together effectively tackle skin pigmentation, fine lines and textural problems, as well as collagen boosting. Dr Taylor-Barnes is very experienced with this unique EBD combo treatment and carries out the treatment personally in her clinic, offering a highly personalised, bespoke service. She used her expertise to assess how many sessions were needed; in my case, it was just the one, with a top-up in six months. The Nordlys SWT IPL plus Frax 1940nm laser is designed to eliminate dark spots and improve skin tone. The IPL involved a series of pulsed flashes delivering precise bursts of light to each freckle/dark spot to break up the pigmentation. It was a little uncomfortable for each nanosecond as the machine passed over my hand, and it felt like an elastic band was being snapped against my skin. Cool air from the chiller device definitely made me more comfortable. Next came the Frax 1940nm laser, which repeatedly rolled over my skin and felt like little needle pricks. Frax 1940nm is a skin resurfacing device that treats only a fraction of the skin, leaving the healthy skin between treated areas intact, speeding healing, and minimising downtime. The creation of tiny micro-wounds resulted in a microscopic wound healing process, forming new collagen fibres. It is a popular treatment for skin resurfacing to improve texture and glow, wrinkle softening, pigmentation and melasma, and pigmented scars. The downtime is brief compared to other more invasive therapies, considering its dramatic results. Dr Taylor-Barnes completed the 'trio treatment' by going over the back of my hands with the fractional Coollaser Erbium:YAG 2940nm laser, which vaporised tiny spots of my skin to help 'shrink wrap' my skin and give me the youthful smoothness I have been wanting for years. The icing on the cake was the end of treatment application of exosomes to accelerate the healing process and boost cell regeneration. The tiny holes in the skin's surface made by the laser devices allowed the exosomes to be absorbed like a sponge.

THE VERDICT

My hands looked scary for about a week as they swelled, and the delicate skin scabbed and peeled. Dr Taylor-Barnes said that the added overlay of the Coollaser would extend the downtime by another week but reassured me that the results would be worth waiting for. Having had a thorough pre-treatment consultation with Dr Taylor-Barnes a few weeks earlier, I was reminded to plan my schedule to avoid important meetings and events and tailor my activities to keep my hands as clean as possible and moisturised until the healing progressed. As this treatment is considered an advanced medical laser treatment, it was reassuring to know I had Dr Taylor-Barnes on standby when I sent her daily selfies in my healing journey. Although there is a little downtime, which can be slightly painful for the first few days while the hands swell and heal, it is so worth it. I feel the 'before and after' pictures don't do the results justice; to the naked eye, my hands' skin is so much smoother and clear of freckles and dark spots.

The results of this treatment are expected to last if the hands are protected from the sun by applying good SPF and wearing kitchen gloves when washing up. You can combine this treatment for patients with dermal fillers to really complete the look. The laser combo treatment exceeded my expectations, and the back of my hand's skin now looks smooth, bright, and plump.



▲ **Before and after session**

PRODUCT NEWS

Vetter

Vetter has announced the development and upcoming launch of the new version of its proprietary V-OVS syringe closure system. The VOVS-Next will integrate several unique technical advances, like new internal design elements that help prevent accidental spillage when opening the closure, and an updated format that supports correct handling and simplifies opening. For customers with products in glass-barrel syringes, this new closure will be an opportunity to integrate gold-standard Luer Lock features, with the system's new size being an optimal fit for a broad range of syringes.

Laser on Tour

Laser on Tour has launched two new devices in the UK; the Milesman Blauman and Milesman Compact portable aesthetic devices. The Blauman uses blue laser technology for precise, pain-free skin lesion removal, while the Compact offers portable diode laser hair removal for all skin types. Both devices come with certified training and marketing support.

DIBI
FACE
1976
LAB
BIOSTIMULATING SYSTEM
Contorno Occhi Biostimolante
Biostimulating Eye Contour Gel
Pure Sonicated HA + GABA + Caffeine Solution
HOME PROGRAM
ALFAPARF MILANO

Dibi Milano

The Biostimulating Eye Contour Gel is a two-week intensive treatment designed to reduce under-eye puffiness and revitalise the skin. Formulated with three types of hyaluronic acid, collagen-boosting GABA and draining caffeine, it smooths, hydrates and strengthens the skin barrier. Clinically tested to reduce free radicals and vascular permeability, it helps prevent fluid buildup for a firmer, refreshed look. The kit includes two 1.5ml applicators for a 16-day at-home programme.

Wildsmith

To tackle the challenges that arise in skin from living in urban environments and exposure to continual changes in temperature and humidity, Wildsmith has introduced a Super Energising treatment mist and Super Moisturising treatment mist. Both are formulated around antioxidant-rich hydrolats distilled from energising English chamomile and moisturising calendula and rose, grown and harvested biodynamically on the Heckfield estate. Both blends are enriched with a low molecular weight hyaluronic acid to provide instant and lasting hydration and support the skin barrier while betaine, an upcycled amino-acid derivative sourced from the sugar production process helps manage the water balance within the skin.

WILDSMITH
SKIN
England, MMXVIII
RADICAL BOTANY
SUPER MOISTURISING TREATMENT MIST
with English Rose and Hyaluronic Acid
3.4 fl.oz 100ml ℮

SKRYBE

Skrybe is a white ink skin marker designed to transform how aesthetic practitioners mark up their patients. White skin markers are seen as the gold standard across the industry due to reduced chance of skin tattooing when injecting, and contrast from hair and skin during laser procedures. Skrybe includes a soft nylon tip allowing for a low-inflammation option for safe skin marking, offering bold white liquid markings, with an easy-to-remove formula. Each pen offers 70 metres worth of scribing in a sleek design.

SKRYBE
skin marker

Medik8

Medik8's Liquid Peptides Advanced MP utilises dual miniprotein biotechnology to reduce the appearance of wrinkles. The serum combines pharmaceutical-grade precision with peptide science, clinically proven to diminish the appearance of expression lines in 10 minutes and deep-set wrinkles in eight weeks. The expression line miniproteins help to relax and smooth dynamic expression lines for visibly reduced wrinkle depth. The growth factor miniprotein visibly improves the appearance of skin structure by helping to support collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid levels, for smoother, firmer-looking skin.

Medik8
LIQUID PEPTIDES
ADVANCED MP
Wrinkle Reduction Serum
30% Multi-Peptide Complex
with Growth Factors
Dual MiniProteins
30mL ℮ / 1.0 Fl. Oz.

Bare Body

The new Bare Biology Ready and Rested Magnesium Bisglycinate Capsules are high-strength magnesium bisglycinate supplements. The formulation delivers 100% of the daily requirement of magnesium without upsetting the digestive system. Magnesium is involved in over 300 enzymatic reactions in the body, so keeping magnesium levels topped up is essential for muscle function and recovery, supporting heart and bone health, and aiding energy production and metabolism. Perhaps most importantly, magnesium is proven to have a calming effect on the nervous system.

BARE
BIOLOGY
ready & rested
magnesium bisglycinate

Biofor

AR Control by Biofor is a multifunctional skincare treatment for professional use. It combines active ingredients such as 20% azelaic acid and retinol, which work together to achieve smoother skin texture and balanced cell renewal. Supportive agents such as niacinamide, bisabolol, centella asiatica, and vitamin B5 were added to address a wide range of skin concerns.

BIOFOR
PERSONALIZED COSMETICS
A-R Control
For skin renewal and sebum control
E5

Miskonceptions

Miskonceptions
SERUM
with
Polynucleotides (PDRN)
& Pro-Regen Complex
Regeneration Booster

Launching from skincare brand Miskonceptions is the PDRN Serum with pro-regen complex. The product contains polynucleotides for fibroblast activity, collagen synthesis, and dermal repair at a cellular level. Accelerating skin regeneration, lifting, and anti-aging while supporting healing and reducing downtime post-aesthetic procedures, the serum synergises with injectables polynucleotide for prolonged results. It is formulated with sturgeon-derived PDRN, biomimetic peptides, multi-weight hyaluronic acid, and anti-inflammatory botanicals, exclusively distributed in the UK by ES Aesthetic Solutions.

BEYOND THE *physician's perspective*

Sylvia Ramirez and **Gunther Scherz** consider the multifaceted impact of ethics in medical aesthetics

The field of aesthetic medicine continues to grow rapidly, offering transformative procedures that enhance appearance and confidence. However, with this growth comes significant ethical challenges that affect not just clinical practice but the entire aesthetic industry. Ethical considerations in this field are essential to ensuring patient safety, trust, and the long-term sustainability of clinics. This article explores the ethical landscape in aesthetic medicine from both clinical and organisational perspectives, offering a broader understanding of the implications for patient care and clinic operations.

NAVIGATING PATIENT AUTONOMY IN AESTHETIC MEDICINE

Patient autonomy is a fundamental ethical principle, yet in aesthetic medicine, it often intersects with unique challenges. Patients frequently seek procedures based on external pressures from social media and peer influences, rather than personal health needs. According to Paul Elgey,[1] the growing accessibility of aesthetic procedures and social media's influence often shape patients' expectations and create unrealistic standards of beauty. This makes it essential for physicians to guide patients toward realistic and healthy goals, ensuring that clinical decisions prioritise the patient's overall well-being rather than fulfilling short-term desires.

Elgey emphasises the importance of balancing patient autonomy with professional integrity. While patients have the right to make informed decisions, it is the physician's responsibility to offer guidance and sometimes refuse procedures that may not serve the patient's best interest. Shared decision-making, based on a clear understanding of risks and benefits, is essential in upholding ethical standards.[2]

MARKET-DRIVEN DISCIPLINE AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Aesthetic medicine is heavily patient-driven, often shaped by market forces rather than purely medical ones. Many patients arrive with preconceived ideas about procedures they want, often influenced by social media or internet research. According to the article in *Modern Aesthetics*, this shift presents significant ethical challenges as patients may request treatments that are neither medically indicated nor beneficial.[3] Physicians must navigate these demands while adhering to ethical principles, especially the doctrine of non-maleficence, or "do no harm."

Research shows that patients who rely on online resources before consultations are more prone to having fixed expectations. For instance, 59-70% of patients use the internet to evaluate procedures and practitioners, which can lead to bias and unrealistic expectations.[4] In such cases, ethical physicians must be prepared to say "no" to requests for unnecessary treatments. Maintaining professional integrity while managing market pressures ensures that patients receive the most appropriate care, even when this means declining certain procedures.

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON AESTHETIC MEDICINE

Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have played a massive role in shaping contemporary beauty standards, driving demand for aesthetic procedures. However, this rise in demand comes with ethical challenges. Social media often perpetuates unrealistic ideals of beauty, contributing to appearance anxiety and dissatisfaction, especially among younger individuals.[5] The use of beauty filters and airbrushed images only intensifies the issue, creating a distorted view of what is achievable through aesthetic procedures.

A key challenge for physicians is the ethical management of their own social media presence. As highlighted by *Modern Aesthetics*, marketing in aesthetic medicine must maintain ethical rigor to avoid sensationalising results or promoting procedures without clear evidence.[3] Physicians have a responsibility to provide accurate, evidence-based content that educates patients rather than misleads them. This aligns with the principles of 'beneficence' – acting in the patient's best interest – and transparency in marketing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND ETHICAL INTEGRITY

Conflicts of interest are prevalent in aesthetic medicine, as financial incentives may sometimes influence treatment decisions. A study by Lopez et al. found that studies declaring financial conflicts of interest were seven times more likely to present positive outcomes, highlighting the risks of bias in clinical practice.[6] This risk is further exacerbated by the commercialisation of aesthetic medicine, where clinics may be incentivised to promote certain treatments, products, or devices based on profitability rather than patient need.

An article in *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine* explores how aesthetic practitioners can mitigate these conflicts of interest by ensuring transparency with patients about financial relationships and the rationale behind their treatment recommendations.[7] By maintaining transparency and offering alternative treatment options, physicians can strengthen trust with their patients and adhere to ethical standards, particularly the principle of justice, which calls for fairness in healthcare.

ORGANISATIONAL ETHICS: FOSTERING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN CLINICS

Ethical practice in aesthetic medicine transcends individual physician behaviour, extending to the establishment of robust, clinic-wide ethical frameworks. Clinics that embed ethics into their organisational culture reap benefits that go beyond compliance, including enhanced patient trust, reduced legal liabilities, and higher employee morale. Research by Franczukowska et al. demonstrates a clear correlation between ethical leadership in healthcare organisations and improved employee engagement, satisfaction, and patient outcomes.[8] This underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping ethical practices and ensuring alignment with the clinic's values and goals.

Healthcare organisations are complex entities that grapple with a breadth of ethical challenges extending beyond the clinician-patient relationship. These challenges span management and governance, the implications of organisational decisions on diverse stakeholders – including practitioners, staff, patients, regulatory bodies, and the industry – and the balancing of key organisational goals such as quality care, financial sustainability, staff management, medical research, and public accountability. Addressing this broad scope requires a comprehensive ethical framework that integrates organisational decision-making with stakeholder considerations.

The balance between financial sustainability and ethical commitments is pivotal. Clinics must ensure profitability to sustain operations, support staff development, and invest in advanced technologies. Simultaneously, a mission-driven approach rooted in patient-centred care and integrity builds trust and long-term loyalty. Leaders who align economic goals with ethical practices reinforce a culture of accountability, distinguishing their clinics in competitive markets where patients prioritise safety, transparency, and quality. By embedding ethics into every aspect of the organisation – training, communication, and decision-making processes – clinics can achieve sustainable growth while honouring their mission to prioritise patient well-being and staff satisfaction.

Finally, clinics that operate with a strong ethical foundation often differentiate themselves in a competitive market. Patients today are more discerning, often choosing clinics that demonstrate a commitment to safety, transparency, and patient-centred care. By maintaining ethical standards at both the clinical and organisational levels, aesthetic practices can build lasting reputations and ensure sustainable growth.

CONCLUSION

Ethical challenges in aesthetic medicine are complex and multifaceted, affecting every aspect of clinical practice and clinic operations. By adhering to the core ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, practitioners and clinics can navigate these challenges successfully. As highlighted in the referenced works, maintaining ethical integrity in the face of market-driven pressures, social media influence, and conflicts of interest is essential for ensuring patient well-being and long-term clinic success. Ultimately, ethical practices not only protect patients but also enhance the reputation and sustainability of aesthetic clinics in an increasingly competitive industry.

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INSURANCE CLAIMS TRENDS

Eddie Hooker, founder and chief executive of Hamilton Fraser, shares the biggest aesthetic insurance payouts in 2024 and other cosmetic claims trends

The world of aesthetics insurance has seen new challenges and trends emerge. While overall reportable claims were down in 2024 from 2023 (in 2023, we had 264 reportable claims and 89 dissatisfactions, and in 2024, we had 250 reportable claims and 66 dissatisfactions), the legal costs of defending these claims are on the rise.

We can never completely prevent a claim, or have any control over what the legal costs are, but understanding the key risks and implementing proactive measures is essential.

WHAT IS A CLAIM?

There are two broad categories of aesthetic claims: those related to treatments or patient complaints and business-related claims related to causes such as fire, flood, denial of access, or pandemic.

In terms of treatment complaints, you have dissatisfactions and reportable claims.

Senior client services technician, Emma Bracchi, explains: "If a patient has said they are dissatisfied with the results of treatment, but there are no allegations of bodily injury, negligence, or financial loss, and they have not approached a solicitor, then this would not trigger the formal claims process. A formal claim is an allegation of bodily injury, negligence, or financial loss, which can be received directly from your patient or via a third-party solicitor."

2024 COSMETIC CLAIMS TRENDS

There were 264 reportable claims in 2024, highlighting the need for early intervention to manage issues before they escalate. The cost of these claims has also risen, primarily due to legal fees, which often dwarf the compensation awarded to patients. Understanding this dynamic can help practitioners focus on reducing risks and improving their processes.

As cosmetics claims handler Priya Chander explains, "While overall there were slightly fewer claims in 2024 than 2023, my observation from our daily encounters with our clients is that there is an increasing trend in patients being unhappy with the treatment results.

"While these complaints may or may not be upheld, what's clear is the cost of investigation and defence is rising."

The rising trend in legal costs is illustrated by these examples from recent years: *figures have been rounded up:

Largest claim payout ever – £1,593,000
- **£1.2 million awarded in damages to the patient**
- **£300,000 for the claimant's legal costs**
- **£93,000 for defence costs**

Here, 24.6% of the total payout was legal costs.

Second largest reserve – £547,000
- **Includes damages and claimant's costs with £80,000 in defence cost**

This is still open, so no claimant costs are available to date.

Smaller claims breakdowns:
- **£65,000 total payout**
  - £13,000 damages to patient
  - £15,000 defence costs (client's solicitor costs)
  - £38,000 claimant's costs (patient legal fees)

In this example, 82% was legal costs.

- **£76,000 total payout**
  - £25,000 damages
  - £10,000 defence costs
  - £41,000 claimant's costs

Here, legal costs made up 67% of the total paid out.

- **£51,000 total payout**
  - £17,000 damages
  - £6,000 defence costs
  - £28,000 claimant's costs

Here, legal costs made up 67%.

This research shows that, increasingly, for many claims, defence costs for both parties represent more than 60% of the total claim value.

Most common treatments that result in a claim

From January 2020 to November 2024, Hamilton Fraser has managed 1,096 medical malpractice claims. The top three claim types were:
- **245 dermal filler claims**
- **210 laser claims**
- **91 botulinum toxin claims**

Together, these three categories account for nearly half of all claims in this period. Notably, hair transplant claims (categorised under general treatments) are emerging as a significant area of concern due to the high associated legal costs:

Hair transplant examples:
- **£98,000 claim**
  - £32,500 damages
  - £18,000 defence costs
  - £47,000 claimant's costs

Legal costs made up 66% of the claim.

- **£84,000 claim**
  - £27,500 damages
  - £7,000 defence costs
  - £49,000 claimant's costs

Legal costs made up 66% of the claim.

- **£28,000 claim**
  - £7,500 damages
  - £7,500 defence costs
  - £12,500 claimant's costs.

Legal costs made up 71% of the claim.

- **£19,000 claim**
  - £7,500 damages
  - £2,500 defence costs
  - £9,000 claimant's costs (47% of total cost).

Here, 60% was legal costs.

THE EARLIER, THE BETTER

One critical takeaway from 2024 claims data is that practitioners should notify their insurers of potential claims or complaints as soon as they arise. Timely notification allows issues to be managed effectively, reducing the risk of escalating costs or legal action.

Addressing issues early can often reduce claims costs, and clients may be supported without the need for formal reporting.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

In reality, serious formal claims against clinics are quite rare. And, while you can't control whether or not a patient makes a claim against you, you can do a number of things that are not only good practice but will help you if a claim is made. One of the key things we see that result in the practitioner losing is because of a lack of evidence and record keeping on their part. While you don't have any control over the legal costs, you do have control over having the right evidence to support yourself should a claim arise.

Patient selection

One of the most important things you can do is at the stage before treatment has taken place, and that is patient selection. Look out for 'red flags' and do not treat patients that you think might be suffering from body dysmorphic disorder or have unrealistic expectations about treatment outcomes.

Manage expectations

Understanding your patient's motivations will help you assess whether they are the right patient for you. When discussing their expectations, be open and honest about whether you feel they are achievable. It's a good idea to document this in your consultation notes as well so that there is evidence that you have had this conversation.

Make sure you document everything and keep records for 10 years

Documentation is key, and this includes timestamped photos and recoding the settings that are used on any equipment. One reason practitioners come unstuck when a claim is made against them is that they do not have before and after pictures. Some policies require that before and after photos are taken for all injectable treatments, so familiarise yourself with your policy conditions. Take a full medical history and identify any pre-existing conditions. Make sure you document what, if any, cosmetic procedures they have had in the past and if they have ever experienced any side effects. You should keep patient records and data safe and save them for 10 years so that you have evidence if a claim is made in the future.

Obtain informed consent

You must always obtain informed consent. Explain all the risks of the treatment clearly and tell them if there are alternative, more suitable treatments. Make sure that they sign the consent form to confirm they understand. You should also make sure the patient is provided with the relevant aftercare information. It's recommended that you provide patients with either an electronic or physical copy of aftercare information that they can refer to after they have left the clinic.

Be contactable post-treatment

You must make sure the patient is able to contact you post-treatment. If you know you're not going to be available, make sure you provide contact details for a peer or colleague who your patient can contact instead. This will prevent the patient from panicking if they develop a side effect post-treatment and are unable to contact you, and it can prevent any concerns from escalating.

Have a comprehensive complaints procedure in place

Don't worry that this might encourage your patients to make a complaint against you, but instead, feel confident that it will provide you with a clear and professional process if you do receive a complaint. Having a clear and comprehensive complaints procedure in place means that you can deal with any complaints efficiently and consistently if you need to.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING IN INSURANCE FOR AESTHETICS PRACTITIONERS

Insurance is an essential investment for any aesthetic professional, and like any investment, it's important to look at quality, substance, and a high level of support services rather than just price alone when choosing which coverage is best for you.

My advice is that practitioners prioritise quality and support over cost alone. It's not a motor policy or a home insurance policy. There are lots of terms and conditions attached to these types of commercial policies, so make sure you understand what you are buying and make sure you are using a reputable Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulated broker. That way, if you are sold the wrong cover, there's a comeback.

Make sure that all the treatments you are performing are covered under the policy. Insurance is only as good as when you make a claim.

- Choose an FCA-regulated broker to make sure your policy is reputable and covers all treatments
- Understand your policy terms and conditions. A good policy includes access to advice and support when claims arise
- Remember, insurance is only as good as its response when you need it

Practitioners must work with brokers who understand the complexities of the industry. When you deal with a broker like Hamilton Fraser, you can ask any question you want, and we can answer it because we understand the business you are in.

Early notification of claims is key to preventing them from spiralling out of control.

When starting your aesthetics journey, choosing your insurance partner should be as important a consideration as choosing your product or training provider. It won't necessarily define your business, but it could one day save it.

While claims cannot always be avoided, practitioners can take significant steps to protect themselves and their businesses. By prioritising evidence, communication, and high-quality insurance, practitioners can minimise risks and safeguard their practices.

EDDIE HOOKER

Founder and chief executive of Hamilton Fraser, Eddie Hooker, is an expert in the cosmetic insurance sector with more than 28 years of experience. Hamilton Fraser was the first company to offer medical malpractice insurance specific to the cosmetic industry in 1996, and Eddie is passionate about continuing to raise standards in the sector. Eddie is an accomplished speaker who regularly provides support, advice and education to practitioners as an industry commentator on key topics such as aesthetics regulation, legislation, insurance and business growth.

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THE UK'S WIDENING GREEN SKILLS GAP

Five ways your business can help close the gap

According to the LinkedIn 2023 Global Green Skills Report, one-third of all jobs advertised in the UK required at least one 'green skill'.[1]

This refers to skills that may be needed to develop and support a sustainable, resource-efficient society. It includes climate action planning, conservation, and sustainable design.

At present, only one in eight British workers possess green skills, with the UK lagging behind several other major economies, including Germany and France.[2]

With skills gaps widening between employers' requirements and available talent, recruitment software company Occupop has put together a report examining how employers can tackle the issue and future-proof their businesses for years to come.[3]

A LOOMING CRISIS?

From renewable energy to eco-friendly technologies, the call for professionals with green skills reverberates across industries.

However, the talent supply is currently insufficient to meet demand. Most alarmingly, this is how the UK compares to its European counterparts. In the wind energy sector, if Britain performed as well as Denmark, it could create an additional 98,000 jobs.[4]

THE GREEN TRANSFORMATION AHEAD

The UK's Net Zero by 2050 strategy will be extended far beyond lofty policy statements and involve tangible, on-the-ground changes.[5] Consider the following:

Infrastructure overhaul: Thousands of miles of cables must be integrated into the national grid. Electric car battery factories need construction. Heat pumps must be installed. Wind, solar and other renewable energy farms will need expansion.

Certified welders and engineers: Experts warn of a "critical shortage" of certified welders and electrical engineers. These skilled workers are the backbone of our green future, yet their scarcity threatens progress.

Net zero ambitions: The UK aims to create a net zero carbon footprint by 2050. Achieving this goal hinges on a workforce equipped with green expertise.

HOW CAN BUSINESSES PLUG THE GAPS?

While the scale of the task may appear daunting, savvy green skills recruitment will bring economic opportunities for businesses.

David Banaghan, interim chief executive at Occupop explains: "The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimates that the transition to a green economy could generate as many as 1.6 million new jobs.[6] This potential job boom is both an economic opportunity and a prerequisite for achieving net-zero targets. To thrive in a sustainable future, companies should invest in upskilling their workforce and nurturing talent with expertise in environmental practices. Additionally, they can leverage technology to level up their recruitment processes." Here are some things to consider:

Training and upskilling: Companies must proactively invest in training programs that equip existing employees with green skills.

Apprenticeships, vocational courses, and certifications can bridge the gap and empower workers to contribute effectively to sustainability initiatives.

Collaborate with educational institutions: Partner with universities, colleges and vocational schools to design a curriculum that aligns with industry needs.

Encourage students to pursue green careers by highlighting their opportunities and impact.

Embrace technology: Harness the power of technology to meet your recruitment challenges head-on. Banaghan adds: "AI-driven recruitment platforms such as applicant tracking software (ATS) can help identify and attract candidates with the necessary green skills for your business. ATS can provide efficient sourcing and screening, customised job postings, automated workflows and effective collaboration among hiring teams – all essential processes in plugging green skills gaps."

Promote diversity and inclusion: Address social class, background, and gender disparities. A diverse workforce brings fresh perspectives and can accelerate innovation.

Create pathways for underrepresented groups to access green training and employment. Digitised recruitment software can help you do this, eliminating any unconscious bias.

Government support and policy alignment: Advocate for policies that incentivise green skills development. Engage with policymakers, if possible, to ensure funding for vocational training and apprenticeships.

CONCLUSION

As the country transitions towards net zero, green skills are likely to continue to be one of the defining recruitment trends of the future.

Businesses that invest in their workforce's green capabilities today will reap the rewards of a sustainable tomorrow.

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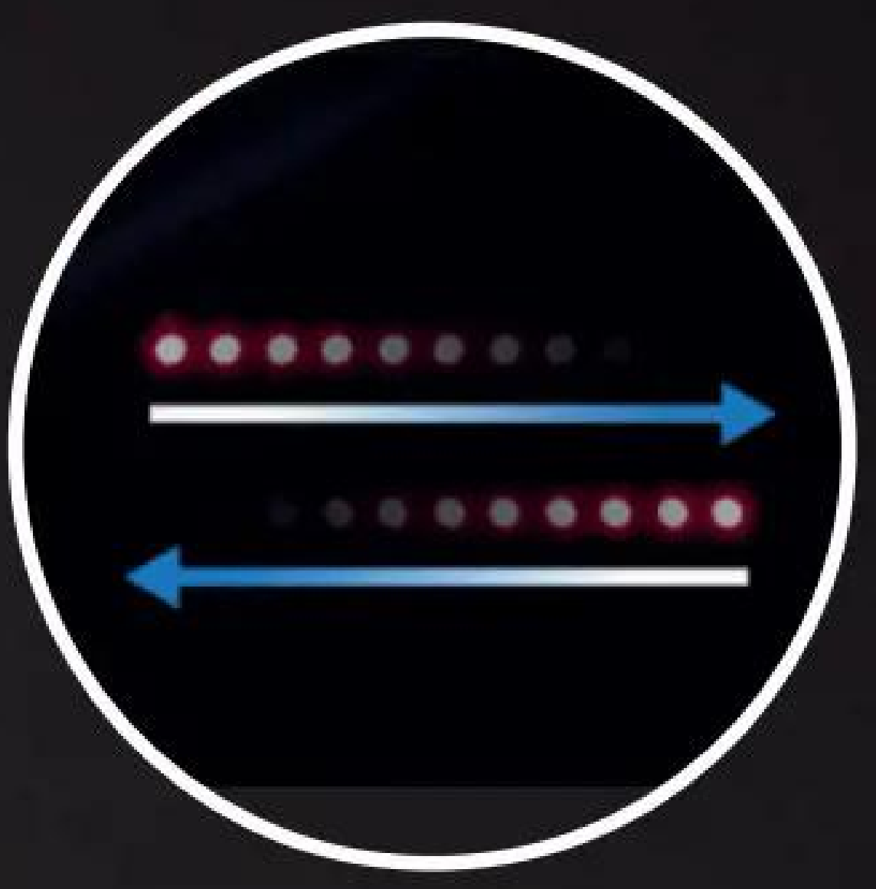

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Balancing Act

Lorna Bowes discusses leadership, work-life balance, and the power of meditation

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Aesthetic Source chief executive Lorna Bowes has built an impressive career in aesthetics, leadership, and business. From her early days in nursing to becoming a leader in the aesthetics industry, Bowes has learned invaluable lessons about work-life balance, being a great manager, and the transformative power of meditation.

A CAREER ROOTED IN CARE

Bowes' professional journey began with a desire to help others. "I wanted to love people to health," she recalls of her nursing school days. Specialising in dermatology in the 1980s, she later travelled the world before discovering aesthetic medicine. "I read an article about injections and thought, 'This is fascinating.'" That curiosity led her to train in cosmetic injectables in 1993, and by 1996, she had founded her own chain of clinics, The Bowes Clinics, which expanded across the UK.

While treating patients brought her immense satisfaction, Bowes soon realised another passion – mentorship. "Looking after my team and seeing them grow was just as fulfilling as treating patients. It was about creating a culture of care, honesty, and integrity."

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP AND TRUST

Bowes' leadership philosophy is built on trust. "If you don't trust your team, they will never grow, and they will resent you for it," she says. She believes in giving employees the autonomy to manage their work schedules while maintaining accountability. "We have structure in the office, but for those on the road, flexibility is key. As long as the work gets done, I trust them to manage their time."

Her approach extends beyond business operations; it's about fostering an environment where employees feel valued. "There's no place for a blame culture. If something goes wrong, we look at why and how we can fix it together."

This leadership style was put to the test when Bowes faced a health crisis. Six years ago, she suffered a stroke – an experience that forced her to reassess her work-life balance. "I was trying to juggle too much – raising three kids, caring for my mother, running a business, and dealing with a difficult marriage. It was too much, and my body shut down."

Her team, led by general manager Carol, stepped in. "Carol changed my Microsoft password so I couldn't log in. She knew I wouldn't stop unless I was forced to. That experience taught me the power of reciprocal care – when you look after your team, they will look after you."

MEDITATION: A GAME-CHANGER FOR LEADERSHIP

Bowes credits meditation with playing a crucial role in her recovery and leadership transformation. After her stroke, she attended a meditation retreat, which helped her regain her vision and, eventually, her driving license.

Now, meditation is part of her daily routine. "I meditate every day. It has fundamentally changed the way I lead and live. It helps me stay present, clear-headed, and emotionally balanced."

She runs a mediation group for healthcare professionals familiar with Dr Joe Dispenza's work. "Every Saturday morning, we come together to recharge. It's beautiful, and it fuels me for the week ahead. I wish I had more time to teach my team meditation because I know the impact it can have."

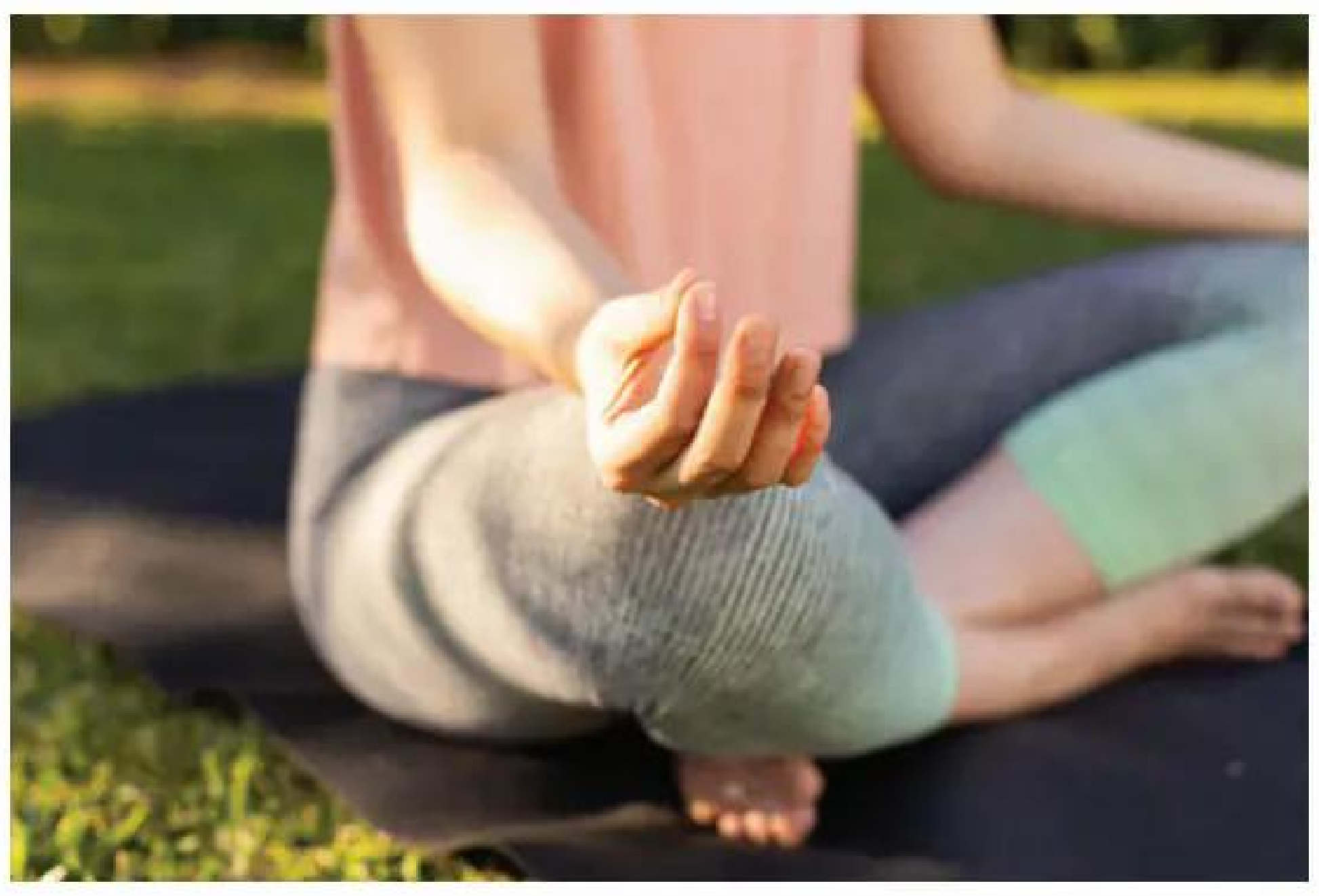
For those new to meditation, Bowes recommends starting small and using tools like MUSE, a device that provides real-time feedback on brain activity. "It plays rainforest sounds, and the calmer you are, the gentler the sound. If your mind is too active, it starts storming – it's an incredible way to train your brain to relax."

RECOGNITION AND MOVING FORWARD

Despite her many accolades, Bowes remains humble. She is currently nominated for an industry award recognising her leadership and contributions. "It's an honour," she says, though she is quick to credit her team. "They put me up for it – it's really their achievement as much as mine."

With her focus on mentorship, innovation, and well-being, Bowes continues to lead with empathy and authenticity. "It all comes down to balance. If you don't get it right, your body will tell you. Meditation, trust, and genuine care – those are the things that keep me going and help my team thrive."

Through her commitment to balance and mindfulness, Bowes is not just leading a business – she's creating a culture of well-being and success. AM



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TURNING ENQUIRIES AND LEADS INTO BOOKINGS

Vanessa Bird explains how to make conversions count

VANESSA BIRD

Vanessa Bird has worked for many leading distributors in aesthetics. She uses over a decade of industry experience, knowledge, and connections as The Aesthetic Consultant to understand the specific challenges faced by many successful, high-profile individuals and clinics as she helps them to succeed in the elite 'top tier'.

Doesn't everyone know how to turn enquiries and leads into bookings? Ask any clinic and the answer will probably be yes. However, dig a litter deeper, identify quieter times, idling devices or even empty diaries and the answer becomes a resounding no. The main driver for growth in a successful aesthetic clinic is new patients. Perhaps patients refer friends and family, or maybe you invest in pay-per-click advertising, social media campaigns or SEO? Whatever your preferred method, when done successfully, they generate enquiries and leads for your clinic. Enquiries and leads should then easily convert into consultations and bookings, keeping the clinic diary full and generating revenue you can reinvest back into your business for growth. Yet not everyone has success with this, and often clinic owners are left feeling frustrated and out of pocket have spent a lot of money on advertising and marketing campaigns. So how do you develop the necessary skills needed to maximise conversions, get a return on your advertising investment and ultimately drive growth for the clinic? You learn how to improve your conversion rates.

SHIFTING THE MINDSET

It all starts with mindset and attitude. People tend to have two main fears when it comes to dealing with enquiries and leads. Let's start by looking at the 'fear' of selling or being seen as pushy. We often think of selling as a very negative, unethical thing, mostly because we only tend to remember bad experiences of being sold to. What people fail to realise is that we are being sold to, in one way or another, every single day of our lives and a lot of the time, when done well, it's extremely enjoyable. Think of a time when you have purchased your dream handbag, car, or holiday. You will have had a conversation with the assistant, told them what you want and then they asked you a few more questions before helping you select something that was perfect for you. The result? You walked away incredibly happy having enjoyed every second of buying something. That is also selling and it is a very positive experience. The second fear people have is the fear of speaking to someone they don't know and feeling like they are 'bothering' that person. Having to contact someone new can feel quite challenging. The good news is, you can change your mind set on both of these thoughts by following the guidance below. By reframing selling as helping, and by using some effective, no-pressure techniques, you can increase the likelihood of converting enquiries into bookings, helping people access treatments that change their lives

UPDATE YOUR TEAM

First and foremost, what is generating leads and enquiries for you? It is vital that every single member of your team is aware of any promotions or advertisements you are running at any one time. Unless your team are prepared, how can they successfully answer enquiries or calls with confidence from people who have seen your advertisement or noticed a promotion? Ensure your team are up to date and use weekly meetings to make sure they know how to answer questions about the treatment, the payment options or even the terms and conditions of the advert. There's nothing more frustrating than enquiring about something only to find the clinic team don't know anything about it. It doesn't make the clinic look professional and it's very unlikely these poorly-handled enquiries will convert into a consultation. Knowing the details of campaigns, adverts or promotions means your team can effectively deal with enquiries, which automatically makes them appear more credible in the eyes of the prospect. The more credibility you have, the easier it is to convert leads into bookings.

SPEED MATTERS

Leads have a limited window of opportunity after their initial interaction/enquiry. According to a study on lead response time done by the Harvard Business Review*, many companies are too slow following up on leads. The study outlined that companies that responded to leads within the first hour of receiving them were seven times more likely to have a meaningful conversation than those who took longer. The average lead response time is over four hours, highlighting a significant opportunity for you to stand out from your competition by prioritising a fast response time. The ideal time for contacting a lead is within five minutes of receiving it, so the longer you wait to respond the more likely the lead will lose interest or find a competitor who responds faster. Become more responsive and enhance your conversion rates!

QUALIFYING INTEREST LEVELS AND WHY IT MATTERS

If you're using a lead generation company, you may have been told that any leads generated have automatically been 'qualified'. This means the person enquiring or responding to the advert or campaign has been screened and deemed to fit the profile of your ideal customer. However, not all Lead Generation companies are equal. If you're promised a guaranteed number of qualified leads per day for a low fee or your 'money back', think twice about investing your hard-earned cash as they are unlikely to qualify the leads properly, leading to frustration and failed attempts at converting them. Always ensure you use a reputable and experienced Lead Generation company who have many years' experience working in aesthetics and understand how to qualify leads properly. If you're not using a lead generation company and your website SEO is working well, you're running campaigns or receiving word of mouth recommendations, it's important to know how to qualify the leads they generate. Failure to do so could mean you waste valuable staff time and effort following up people who never really intended to book in with you, nor could afford your treatments.

Try and qualify leads within the first couple of minutes of a call. A simple way to do this is to use the cold, warm and hot grading system. Cold leads show minimal to no interest when you reach out, whereas warm leads are potential patients who show interest in your treatments. Hot Leeds are genuinely interested people who are actively seeking out a solution to a perceived problem or need. How can you quickly tell the difference? By how they respond to you when you are reaching out to them. Cold leads may have initially shown interest by filling out a form or clicking on an advert, but may seem disinterested or even surprised when you contact them. Assess these quickly and if there is no actual interest move on. Don't spend too much time on this type of lead or enquiry. Warm leads have gone a step further, having signed up for a newsletter, filled out a form or downloaded a fact sheet. These people are worth developing as they are usually in the research and comparison stage. Spend time based on their level of interest. If they are indecisive, suggest a follow-up call or email. Hot leads are very open in their intent to move forwards, asking specific questions about treatments, pricing or availability. These people should be your priority. Provide detailed information and book them in. By grading leads based on their level of interest or engagement, your team can prioritise their efforts and focus on those people most likely to convert.

AVOIDING TIME WASTERS

To avoid time wasters, look out for the following red flags:

1. They are unresponsive and don't respond to calls or emails.
2. They are overtly price-sensitive and ask price-focused questions only.
3. They are unaware of you or your clinic and appear to have done little research.
4. They have vague or uncertain goals meaning they probably lack genuine intent.
5. They are reluctant to commit which indicates low interest or readiness to commit.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Before you can ask the right questions, you need to listen! This is important so you can understand them better. Listening helps you gather information about their needs and preferences and shows you are genuinely interested in helping them. Use open-ended questions that allow you to dig deeper and fact-find, encouraging them to open up to you. Great questions include, "How do you feel we can help you with this?" Or "Would it be helpful if I explained this in more detail?" Don't be afraid to ask them what kind of research they've done, when they are looking to have the treatments and if they have any further questions. Don't forget to personalise your approach by addressing them by name and referencing any previous interactions you've had with them. Tailor your message to their specific situation, pain points and preferences. This will show you've taken the time to understand their needs and it increases the likelihood of them engaging and booking in.

OBJECTIONS

Don't be afraid of objections; they are very common during the enquiry stage. It's essential you understand how to handle them confidently and effectively. Listen actively to their concerns and ask probing questions to uncover the underlying reason behind their hesitation or objection. Sometimes they aren't ready, they lack information, they don't think you have a solution, or maybe they misunderstood something. Always acknowledge their objection as a valid point-this makes them feel heard. Never interrupt and use clarifying questions, so you truly understand why they are hesitant. Once you understand the reason behind their objection, you can use relevant features and benefits about the treatment tailored to their wants and needs. This builds trust and demonstrates your commitment to their satisfaction.

PRICE AND DEPOSIT OBJECTIONS

Let's get down to price, as this is the most common objection. When you don't know much about the clinic, the practitioner or the treatment, the only way you can decide is to buy on price. Remember, people may not understand why you have higher pricing, so it is important to educate them. Price is rarely the real issue and the best way to avoid this is to build value throughout your communication. Educate the patient about what they are paying for, including, safety, experience levels, pre-post care and anything else that may be included. Make sure they understand the true value of what they are getting and not just the price tag of each treatment you offer. Break pricing down into tiers, giving plenty of options before recommending they book in for a consultation to receive a personalised quotation. If you offer payment plans, now may be a good time to mention it. If you are really struggling, consider booking specialist sales training to help you team build confidence when handling price objections.

CLOSE THE LOOP

Once you have overcome their objections it's time to close the loop by 'selling' the next step. One key thing to remember is that in many instances, the next step is booking them in for a consultation rather than trying to sell them a course of treatments. It's easier and more comfortable at this stage to pay a deposit for a consultation than hand over thousands for a treatment. Make sure you've agreed on what's been discussed before attempting to close the loop. Try the following phrases to move easily towards the booking confirmation: "Shall I check the diary and see what's available?", "Would you like your consultation with a nurse or a dermatologist?", "We'd love to get you booked in while this offer is still available. Would you prefer a morning or afternoon appointment?"

CONCLUSION

It is important to be in the mindset of helping to be successful at converting enquiries and leads into bookings Make sure every person in the team knows the details of all current promotions, packages or adverts that are currently being used to generate enquiries and leads. Respond quickly, as this increases the likelihood of converting them into bookings. Use effective listening and questioning techniques to dig deeper and personalise your solutions to the wants and needs of the person enquiring. Don't be afraid of objections; they are a great opportunity to highlight the features and benefits of your clinic and your treatments. Demonstrate value at each stage of the conversation as this minimises the likelihood of price objections, and if they do occur, remember, price is rarely the real issue. Close the loop with confidence by moving them onto the next step, which is booking a consultation rather than trying to sell over the phone or by email. Incorporate regular lead conversion training into your team meetings and remind them of the promotions you have running. The more successful you are at converting enquiries and leads, the busier you get, and the more revenue you generate, but most importantly of all, you'll be able to help more people achieve results that truly change lives.

If you want to provide your team with expert training on handling enquires, you can benefit from a 10% saving on Bird's online course, Mastering the Art of Converting Leads, by quoting **AMOFFER** at checkout: **https://theaestheticconsultant.teachable.com/p/master-the-art-of-converting-leads**

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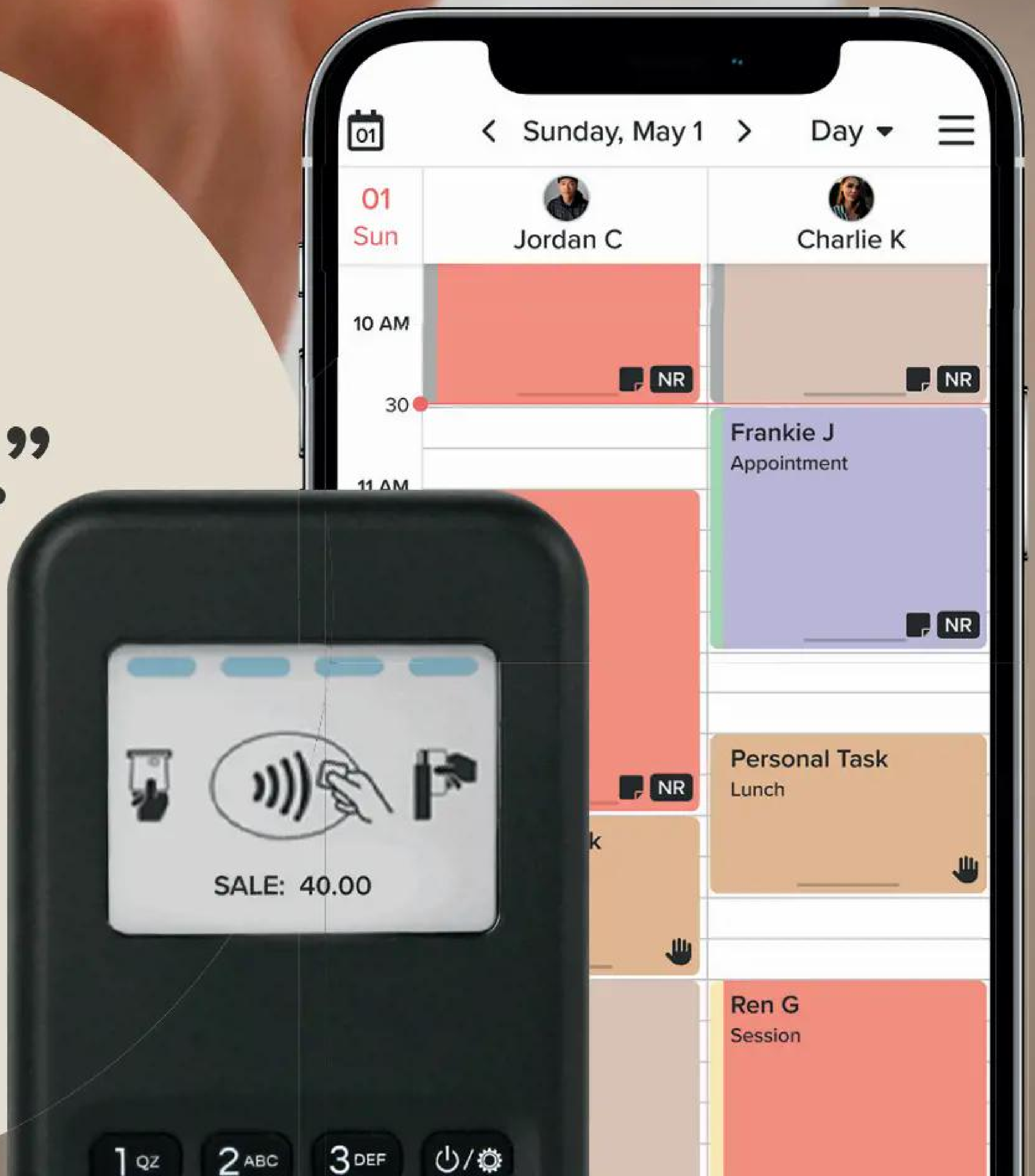
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Ask Alex

ALEX BUGG

Alex Bugg works for Web Marketing Clinic, a family-run digital agency, which specialises in medical aesthetics. The business builds websites and delivers marketing campaigns for doctors, nurses, dentists, distributors and brands. Contact her at: **alex@webmarketingclinic.co.uk** or follow her on Instagram: **@webmarketingclinic**

"How can I diversify my social media, after seeing TikTok banned and reinstated?"

This is a great question – social media plays a part in almost every aesthetic clinic. However, as the political climate shines light on social media companies, keeping all of your eggs in one basket is a risk. TikTok was recently banned in the US – albeit temporarily – but at the time, thousands of creators lost their income, and uncounted American businesses lost their visibility with potential customers.

If your clinic is only on Instagram, you're not alone. You can start small but need to think long-term about your social media visibility across the internet. Diversity should bring more brand reach, engagement and enquiries. This article will hopefully give you the reasons why you should diversify – and steps on how to.

THE RISKS OF A ONE-PLATFORM STRATEGY

The risk isn't just governments switching off platform access, trends just die, and people move elsewhere. MySpace, Bebo, Vine and Google+ are just some of the massive platforms which fell out of favour with social media users. There has been an exodus in users of X (formerly Twitter) in response to Elon Musk's ownership.

If you're using paid ads on your platform of choice, cost and performance can vary, too. Any paid ad strategy should be multiplatform.

Sticking to one platform might seem simple, comfortable and be working for you currently, but there are plenty of upsides to branching out.

THE BENEFITS OF MULTI-PLATFORM PRESENCE

Being visible on more than one platform increases your brand awareness, as the saying goes "you miss 100% of the shots you don't take". If one platform slumps, for whatever reason, you can rely on others to still drive enquiries.

Google also displays your social media pages, so showing up in multiple places increases your stamp on search rankings.

Different generations or demographics tend to cluster on different platforms, so if you want to diversify your patient base, ask yourself if your content would be reaching them in the first place.

ONE CONTENT FORMAT IS JUST AS RISKY

Are you comfortable making Reels? Are you all-in on before and afters? Algorithm-based formats – just like social platforms – fall out of favour. You need to mix your post types up too.

- Reels have the highest current reach potential, but some Meta users still aren't hooked on them, so if you're just posting them, you might miss out some of your audience
- Carousels are great (and Instagram shows them twice in someone's feed) for storytelling and education. TikTok carousels are gaining traction too – these swipe-able images aren't just for Instagram
- Single-image posts are probably what built your account, and are great for simple messaging – though I'd use two over one every time for the reason above
- Stories and live content keep real-time engagement high.

HOW TO DIVERSIFY SOCIAL MEDIA WITHOUT LETTING IT OVERTAKE YOUR LIFE

Switching things up is overwhelming. You can start by repurposing content, placing Instagram videos on TikTok or YouTube. Take reviews and make them into graphics (Canva templates are your friend here) for Explore Pinterest, Threads, LinkedIn. *Find something you love browsing,* and you've found a new platform you'll enjoy posting on.

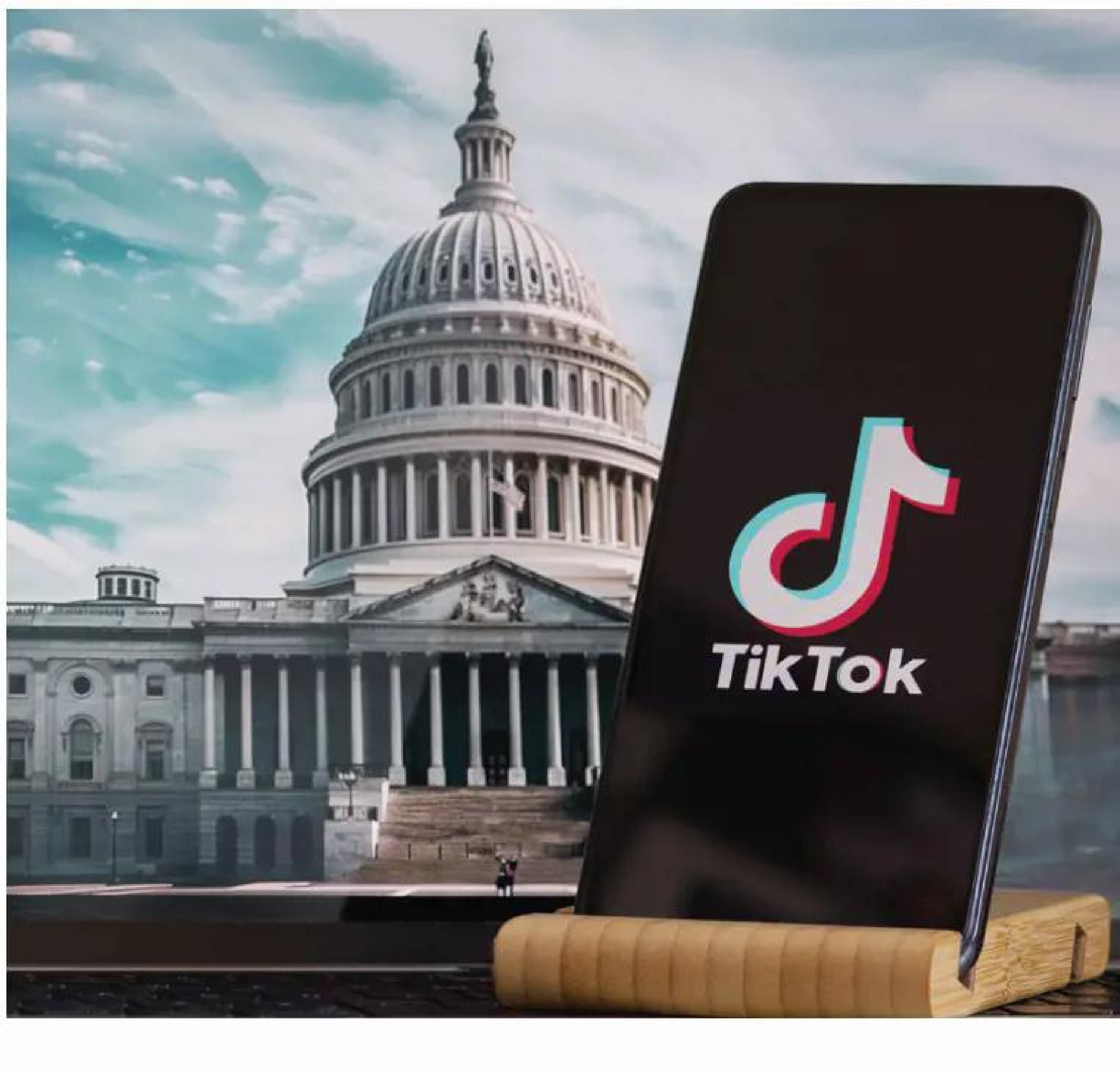
Social scheduling tools like Planable, Meta Business Suite, Sprout Social and Later can help take the weight off posting across multiple social platforms.

Of course, as you start posting new formats or on new platforms, make sure you keep a look at the analytics to see what is working, what isn't, and adjust accordingly. See where social leads are coming from and use what is working to generate them.

A multi-platform, multi-format approach is optimal for any clinic social media, to futureproof against trends, platform disappearance and burnout. Also having an email database is a key step in communicating with patients and followers where they

My last piece of advice? Use your intuition. You know your ideal patients better than anyone else, so trust what you're doing, even if it doesn't look exactly like what everyone else is doing.

If you've got a burning aesthetics marketing question for Ask Alex, please get in touch **@webmarketingclinic** via Instagram, or email **alex@webmarketingclinic.co.uk**



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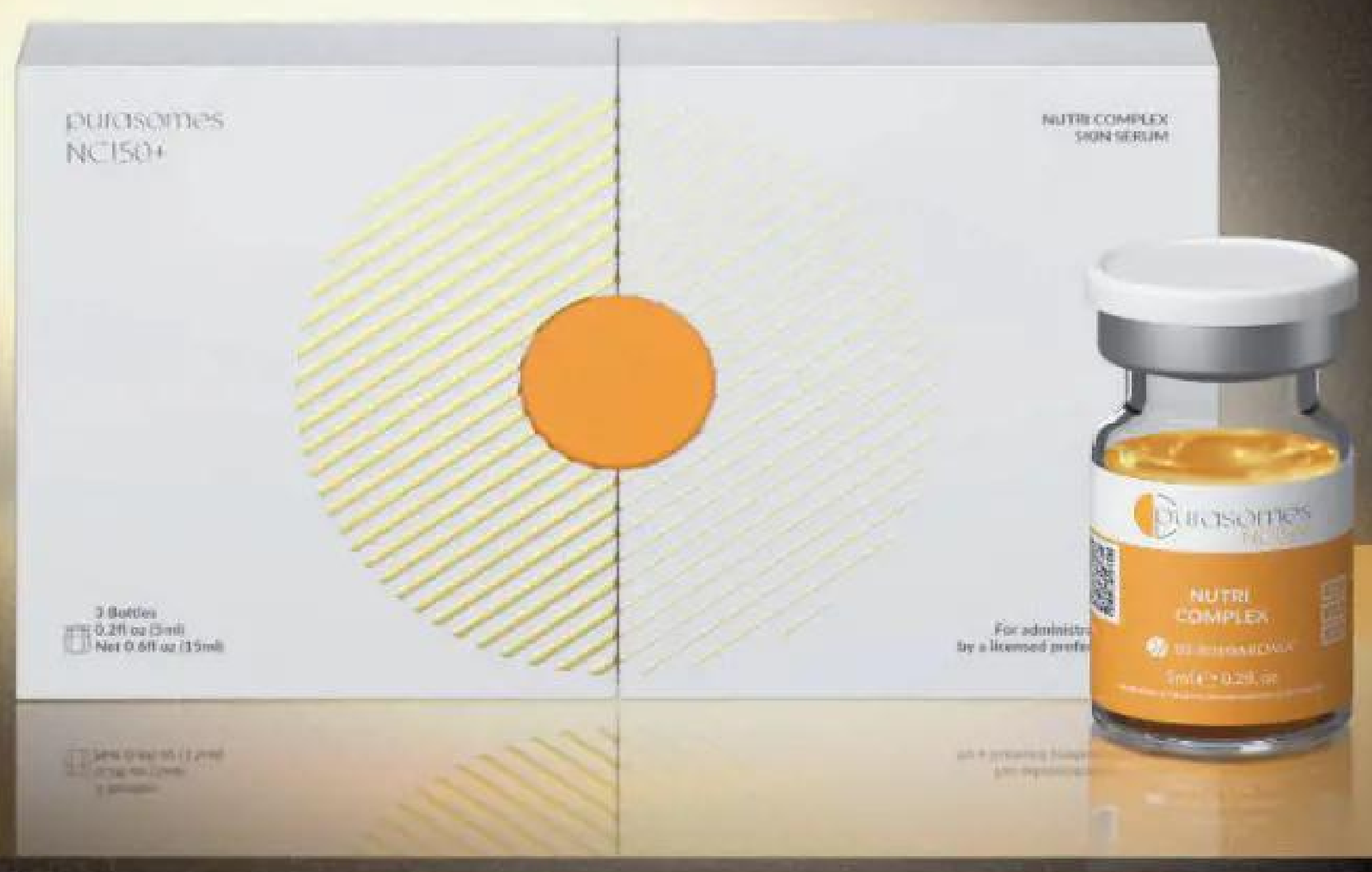

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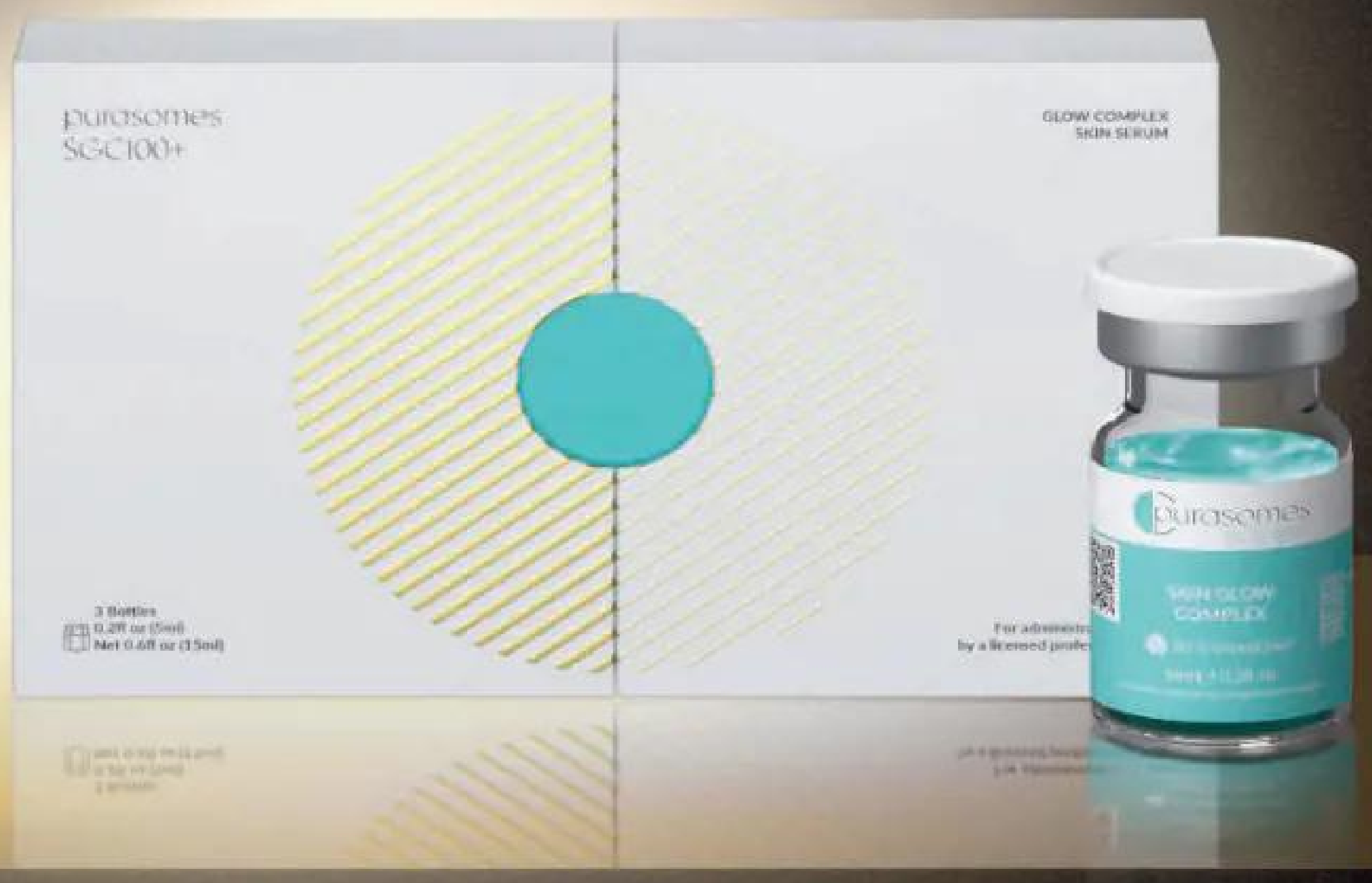

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